13

KASI,

OR

BENARES;

THE HOLY CITY OF THE HINDUS.

COMPILED FROM SHERRING,
BUYERS, KENNEDY, CAINE, AND OTHER AUTHORS.

BENARES.

MADRAS:
THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY.
S. P. C. K. PRESS, VEPERY.

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Note.—With regard to Ghats and Temples, Sherring's *Sacred City of the Hindus* has supplied much of the information. This is now out of print, but a *Handbook for Visitors to Benares*, by Mr. Sherring, is published by Messrs Newman, Calcutta, Price, Rs. 2. There is also *The Benares Guide Book*, published by Dr. Lazarus, Benares, Price 1 Re. There is a graphic sketch of the city in Caine's *Picturesque India*. A good deal of information will also be found in *Benares and Kumaun*, by the Rev. James Kennedy. The compiler had the advantage of going over the city with Mr. Sherring as his cicerone. Lately he was indebted to Rev. A. Parker, of the London Mission, Benares, for the same favour. Any suggestions with regard to the next edition will be welcomed.

J. Murdoch.

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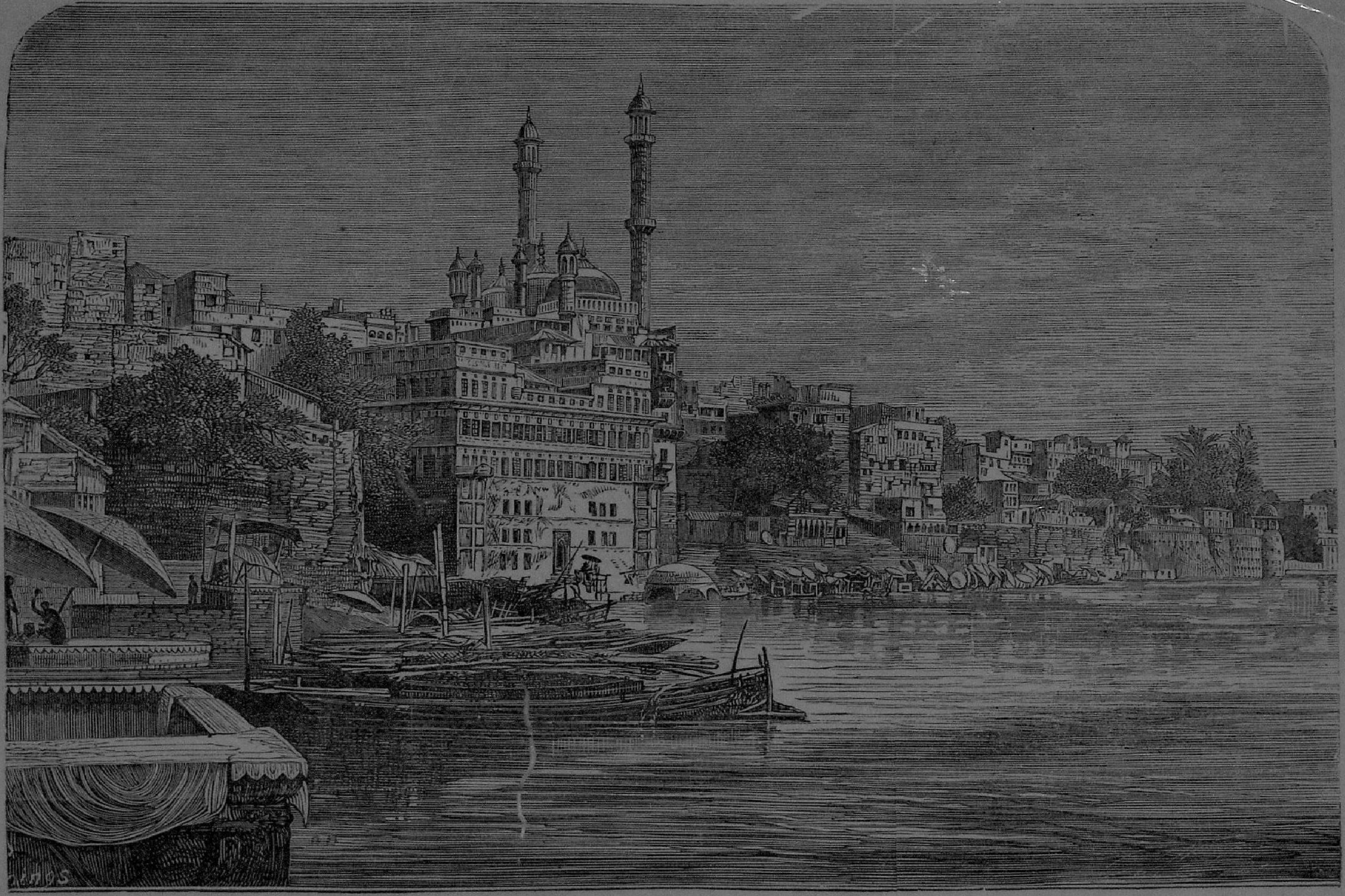


BENARES.

KASI, OR BENARES,

THE HOLY CITY OF THE HINDUS.

Sacred Character.—To the Hindu, Kasi is the most sacred spot on earth. It is far more to him than Jerusalem is to the Jew or Mecca to the Muhammadan. The Hindus, indeed, affirm that it is not built on earth, but on a point of Siva's trident. At one time it is said to have been of gold; but in the Kali Yug it has been turned into stones and mud. Though the Ganges is supposed to be sacred during its entire course, as it flows past Kasi its cleansing power is believed to be vastly increased. The rites performed there have double efficacy: the very soil is fraught with blessing. All who die within *Panch Kosi*, or within a circle of 10 miles around the city, are sure to go to heaven, whatever may have been their character.

Pilgrims, when they first get a glimpse of the holy city, raise shouts of *Jai, jai, Kasinath*, "Victory to the lord of Kasi!" Some, not deeming it sufficiently respectful to enter it on foot, prostrate themselves on the ground, measuring it with their bodies. Individuals have been known to come great distances in this way.

Names.—KASI means the *shining*, the *splendid*. The name VARANASI often occurs in early Sanskrit literature. By transposition of the consonants, it is converted into BANARAS or BENARES. Varanasi has been explained as a compound of Varana, or Barna, and Asi, two small streams which flow into the Ganges to the north and south of the city, but this is doubtful.

Position.—Benares is situated on the northern bank of the Ganges, about 120 miles below its junction with the Jumna, at an elevation of 250 feet above the sea level. It is 476 miles from Calcutta by rail: the fare, 3rd class, is Rs. 6-3-3. From Bombay, via Allahabad, it is 938 miles; fare, 3rd class, mail train Rs. 17-2-0. From Madras the distance is 1550 miles, and the fare, Rs. 20-10-9.

The city stretches for about four miles along the northern bank. The river, more than a third of a mile in width, sweeps round like a half moon. Along the northern bank a precipitous cliff rises to the height of 100 feet; the opposite bank is low, and is flooded by the river during the rains.

District.—The DISTRICT of Benares contains 998 square miles. It lies on both banks of the Ganges. The northern part consists of a level plain, only broken by the ravines of two small streams, the Barna in the west and the Nand in the north. The deep gorge of the Karamnasa skirts the south-eastern boundary of the southern portion. The district is fertile, and well cultivated. It is the most thickly peopled in the North-West Provinces. In 1881 the population amounted to 892,694 giving 894 persons to the square mile. Hindus numbered 801,556; Musalmans, 89,351; Christians, 1768; Jains, 7; and Parsis, 2. Brahmans were the most numerous caste, amounting to 104,092; next were the Chamars, 101,091; Ahirs, 80,088; Rajputs, 53,930; Kachhis, 41,834; Bhars, 36,467; Kurmis, 29,849; Kahars, 28,376.

The District contains only two towns with a population above 5000—Benares and Ramnagar. The latter is properly a suburb of Benares. The people live in small scattered hamlets, thickly and evenly dotted over the plain. They were not obliged to collect in walled towns, as in the Upper Provinces, to protect themselves from Mahratta and Afghan incursions.

General View.—"Benares," says Mr. Caine, "is without question the most picturesque city in India. It lies on a bend of the Ganges, along the crest of a hill about 100 feet above the water. Viewed from the river, it presents a panorama of palaces, temples, and mosques, surmounted by domes, pinnacles and minarets, stretching three miles along the top of the bank. From these descend great flights of stone stairs, broken into wide platforms, on which are built exquisite Hindu shrines, bathing-houses, and preaching canopies. Long piers

BENARES, FROM THE OPPOSITE BANK.

project into the river, on which sick people lie, carefully tended by their relatives, to get the beneficent healing of the great mother Ganges. Ghats, platforms and piers are alive with pilgrims from every part of India, in every variety of costume, and every stage of dress and undress, grouped under huge straw umbrellas, sitting at the feet of some learned mohant or preacher, gazing at holy ascetics, jostled by sacred bulls, crowding in and out of the water, drying themselves with towels, prostrate at the margin telling beads. Crows, kites, pigeons and parrots circle round the heads of this kaleidoscopic crowd. Up and down the ghats, all day long, but especially in the early morning, stream the endless course of pilgrims, ragged tramps, aged crones, horrible beggars, hawkers, Brahman priests, sacred bulls and cows, Hindu preachers, wealthy rajas or bankers in gay palankins, fakirs, pariah dogs, and scoffing globe-trotters * from Europe and America.

"A pathetic feature of this jostling, bellowing crowd is the large number of tottering aged women, with scanty white locks, coming out of the cold river, crawling feebly up the steep steps with their wet clothes clinging to their poor shivering lean legs, shrinking into some recess lest the shadow of a passing Englishman or Musalman should fall upon them, a calamity that spoils the effect of the sacred cleansing, and renders it needful to creep back once more to the chill water. Hundreds of aged creatures of both sexes are always in Benares, having left home and family, perhaps a thousand miles away, never to return, happy and glad to chill themselves slowly into heaven in the sacred waters of the Ganges." †

History.

Although the Hindus early distinguished themselves by their great advances in grammar and logic, they do not possess any truthful accounts of their history. The very word *history* has no corresponding Indian expression. *Itihas,* a compound of *iti, ha, ása,* simply means "There was once upon a time." In Sanskrit authors, it denotes a mere legend. From the very earliest ages down to the present time, the Hindu mind seems never to have conceived such an idea as an authentic record of past facts based on evidence. Legendary stories are so mixed up with real events that it is often impossible to discover which is fiction and which is fact. The most extravagant statements are accepted as true. Time is measured by millions of years; if a battle is described, millions of soldiers, elephants, and horses are

* Travellers who go hurriedly round the world. † *Picturesque India*, pp. 301, 302.

brought into the field. There is, therefore, no trustworthy account of the early history of Benares.

The popular idea is that Benares existed before the great flood mentioned by Manu. It was not destroyed, because Siva raised it on the top of his trident! It was probably founded by the Aryans soon after they spread over that part of Northern India. Sakya Muni, or Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, is supposed to have lived about the sixth century before Christ. He is said to have attained Buddhahood under a tree in the neighbourhood of Gaya; but he began preaching his doctrines at Benares. On his way a naked ascetic met him, and asked why his countenance was so bright. He replied: "I am the all-subduer, the all-wise, the stainless, the highest teacher, the conqueror. I go to Benares to dissipate the world's darkness."

IMAGE OF BUDDHA IN JAPAN, 32 CUBITS HIGH.

Buddha's first sermon was delivered in the Deer-park at Benares to five ascetics, his former companions. It is called "The discourse which set in motion the wheel of the law." The following is the substance of it:

"There are two extremes, O monks, to be avoided by one who has given up the world—a life devoted to sensual pleasures which is degrading, common, vulgar, ignoble, profitless, and a life given to self-mortification—painful, ignoble, profitless. There is a middle path, avoiding both extremes—the noble eightfold path discovered by the Buddha—which leads to insight, to wisdom, to quietude, to knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to final extinction of desire and suffering (Nirvána)."*

Benares must at this time have been a city of power and importance. This was the reason why Gautama commenced there his public teaching.

Some of Buddha's leading doctrines were borrowed from Hinduism, and had been advocated before his time. Two of the latest teachers were Kassapo, or Kasyapa, and Konagamano. Gautama declared that they were previous Buddhas, and claimed for his creed the sanction of their names.

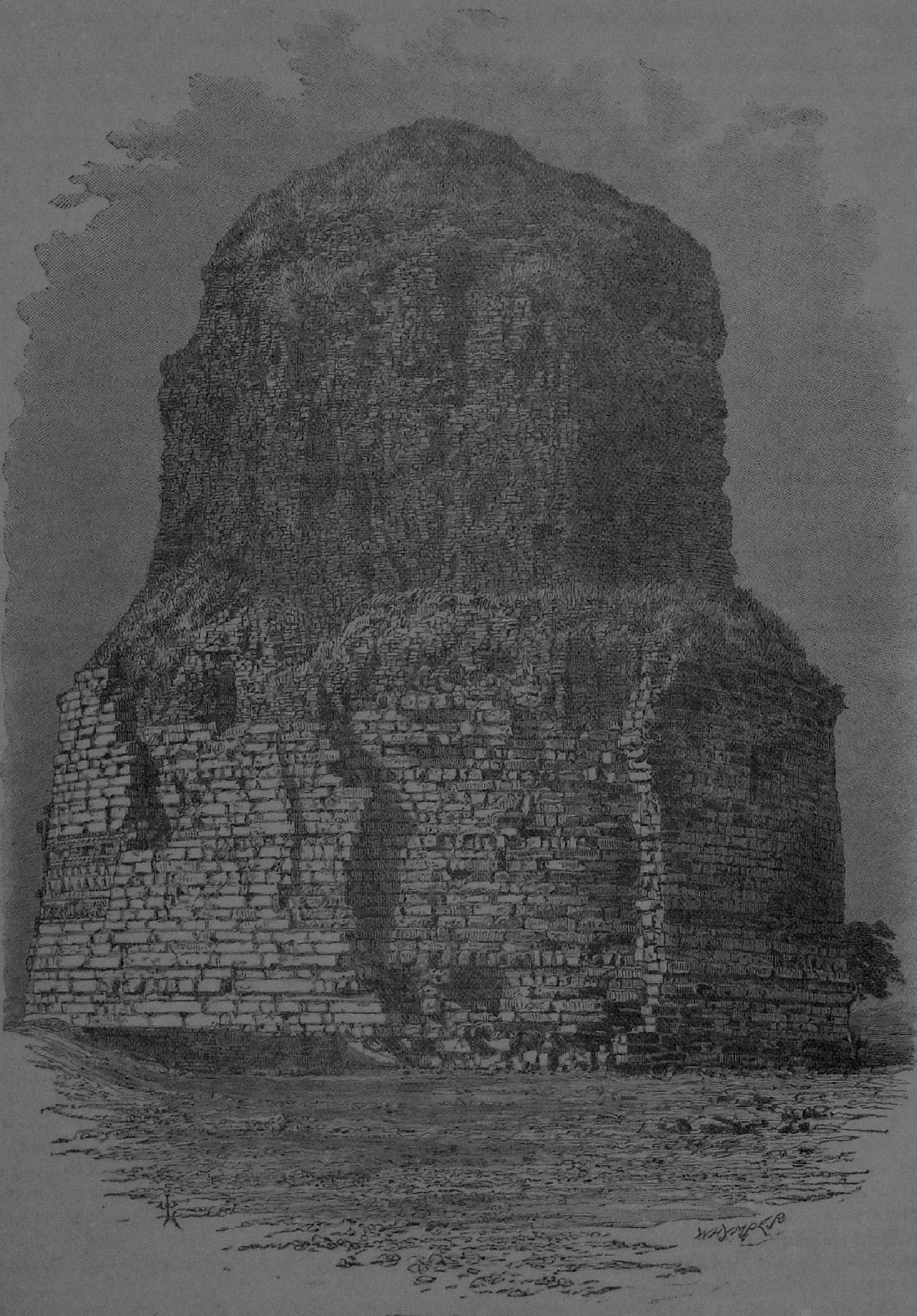
Buddha gradually gathered around him a small band of followers, whom he sent out to preach in different directions: "Go ye out, oh disciples," said he, "and travel from place to place, for the welfare of many people, for the joy of many people, in pity for the world, for the blessed welfare of gods and men."

Buddhism spread slowly over North India; but it received a great impulse from Asoka, King of Magadha or Behar, who began to reign 264 B.C. Asoka gradually subdued most of the petty princes of India from Bengal to the frontiers of Afghanistan, and southward as far as Mysore. This is proved by his edicts, inscribed on rocks and stone pillars, scattered over India. About 257 B.C. he declared himself a Buddhist, the first king who made such a profession. In his edicts he prohibits the slaughter of animals for food or sacrifice, gives directions about hospitals for man and beast, appoints missionaries for the propagation of Buddhist doctrines, and inculcates peace, toleration, and morality. He is said to have maintained 64,000 Buddhist monks in Magadha, which was on that account called the land of monasteries (Vihára the modern Behar).

Asoka† is said to have erected a large *stūpa* on the spot near Benares where Buddha first taught his doctrines. It is a solid dome, 93 feet in diameter, at base, and 128 feet in

* *Buddhism*, by Sir Monier Williams, pp. 42, 43.

† Some writers attribute to it a much later origin. A *stupa* is a building to commemorate some event; a *dagaba* is for the reception of supposed relics of Buddha.



STUPA AT SARNATH.

height. The lower part is built of stone; the upper part of large bricks. The former has eight projecting faces, with niches to receive a statue. The eight statues have disappeared: they probably represented Buddha. The stones are held together by iron cramps. An

ornamental band of geometric figures, flowers, and birds, goes round the middle of the lower portion. A low passage leads right through the *stûpa*. There is a small room in the centre, and a narrow opening to the top.

To the west of the tower are the remains of a hospital and of an old Buddhist monastery. Only the foundations are now visible.

The stûpa, or tower, is named *Dhamek,* probably a corruption of Dharma. The place is called *Sárnáth,* probably a corruption of *SaranggGanath,* Lord of Deer. It was originally a deer garden.

There was another large brick *stûpa,* but it was demolished, for the sake of the bricks, by Jagat Singh, the Dewan of Raja Chait Singh.

About half a mile distant from the Dhamek stûpa there is a mound of solid brick work, 74 feet high. On the top there is an octagonal building, erected in 1531 A.D, to commemorate the ascent of the mound by the Emperor Humayun. This is now called Lori's Leap, from a Hindu, of the name of Lori, having leaped from its summit, and killed himself.

For several centuries Benares was the head quarters of Buddhism. The city then lay around Sarnath to the north of the Barna. After a time Hinduism began to recover its hold. The Brahmans adopted several Buddhist doctrines, and pretended that Vishnu appeared as Buddha to encourage wicked men to despise the Vedas, reject caste, and deny the existence of the gods to their own destruction. Hiuen Tsiang a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, visited India in the 7th century of the Christian era. He describes the people of Benares as "mostly unbelievers, a few reverence the law of Buddha. There are about 30 monasteries and 3,000 monks. There are a hundred or so Déva temples, with about 10,000 heretics. They honour principally Mahesvara. Some cut their hair off, others tie their hair as a knot, and go naked without clothes; they cover their bodies with ashes, and by the practice of all sorts of austerities, they seek to escape from transmigration."

Sankar Acharya, who lived in the 8th or 9th century, by his disputations with the Buddhists and his writings, did much to promote the worship of Siva in Benares. In the eleventh or twelfth century, the Buddhists seem to have been finally expelled. Numbers of images concealed by the departing monks have been found buried near Sarnath, and heaps of ashes still lie scattered amidst the ruins to show that the monasteries were destroyed by fire. Major Kittoe, the Government Archeologist, who made extensive excavations at Sarnath, says: "All has been sacked and burned—priests, temples, idols, all together; for in some places bones, iron, wood and stone, are found in huge masses, and this has happened more than once."

Large numbers of statues have been dug out of the ruins, many of which are preserved in the grounds of the Government College.

Benares has shifted its position several times. The oldest town occupied the site of Sarnath. At a later period the centre of the city lay north of the Barna. This is shown by the ruins with which the ground is studded. Up to the Muhammadan period the city lay close to the south bank of the Barna; while the modern frontage faces the Ganges alone.

Muhammad Ghori took Benares in 1194 A.D., and the Muhammadans continued to hold it for 600 years. They converted all the larger temples into mosques or tombs, and destroyed or mutilated the remainder, using their walls as quarries for building materials. Ala-ud-din boasted that he had razed to the ground 1,000 shrines in Benares alone. Most of the existing buildings date no further back than the reign of Akbar (died 1605).

During the 18th century Benares fell into the hands of the Nawabs of Oudh. In 1738, Mansa Ram, the founder of the family greatness of the present Maharaja of Benares, obtained for his son Balwant Singh the title of Raja, and the three districts of Jaunpur, Chunar, and Benares. In 1763, the Raja joined the Mogul Emperor and the Wazir of Oudh in their invasion of Bengal; but after the defeat at Baxar, he prudently went over to the English. In 1775, Benares was ceded to the British. Chait Singh, an illegitimate son of Balwant Singh, was acknowledged as his successor. In 1781 Warren Hastings sought to arrest Chait Singh for refusal to obey orders, when a general rising took place in the city, and Hastings escaped with difficulty to Chunar. Chait Singh was then deposed, and his nephew was acknowledged as Raja. The title was afterwards changed to Maharaja.

When Wazir Ali, Nawab of Oudh, was deposed by the British in 1798 he received orders to live at Benares. The following year he attacked Mr. Cherry, the Governor-General's

Agent, and murdered him and two other officers. Wazir Ali escaped for a time, but was afterwards taken and confined for life in Calcutta.*

When news of the outbreak at Meerut in 1857 reached Benares, the 37th Native Infantry became disorderly, and it was determined to disarm the men. They replied to the order with a volley, but when it was returned they dispersed. The civil officers held the Mint and the Treasury, and the rebellion went no further. A fort was erected at Rajghat, on a site which commands the whole city. The late Maharaja of Benares did good service during the Mutiny. He died in 1889, and was succeeded by his nephew who has received an English education.

Streets and Houses.

As already mentioned, Benares stands on a high bank of the Ganges.

The city is in the shape of a half moon, with its inner curve to the river, while its suburbs extend outward along the various roads leading in different directions to the country inland.

The streets in the city are generally narrow and winding. They do not admit carriages. In some of them a palanquin can be taken with difficulty. The houses, built of Chunar stone, are often very lofty; several have as many as seven stories. Some of the houses are richly carved; others have paintings in gaudy colours. The upper stories often project beyond the lower floor, and occasionally small bridges connect the houses on opposite sides of the street. To prevent inspection from the neighbouring fronts, the windows are few and very small. The women's apartments are in the upper stories. During the hottest months of the year most of the people sleep on the roofs of their houses. There are some large houses near the river belonging to Rajas, who, though not usually resident, occupy them when they come on pilgrimage. Some of the largest of these buildings have private temples, erected like towers on the high terraced roofs. Brahmans also live in them, who are supposed to perform ceremonies for the benefit of the owners.

The city is divided into *mohullas*, or wards.

The European Civil and Military Station of Secrole (properly Sikraul) is situated on the north side of the city of Benares, about three miles from the river. Northward of the Barna, which is crossed by two bridges of stone and iron respectively, lie the Civil Lines and Police Parade Grounds. South of the Barna lie the Cantonments, the Church, Post Office, and Court House. West of the city stands the suburb of Sigra, a Missionary station. Southward is Bhelipur, claimed to be the birthplace of Parisnath, the last of the Jain Saints. In contradistinction to the city, the suburbs have broad roads.

Improvements in Benares.—Formerly the roadways of the narrow streets were only mud,—dusty in the hot weather and wet ditches in the rains. A magistrate ordered the owner of each house to pave the part of the street before his property, with a drain underneath. This occasioned a great outcry at the time, but its benefit was afterwards acknowledged. Some wide roads have also been formed for the free passage of carts and to admit fresh air.

The two chief requisites for the health of towns are a supply of *good water* and *good drainage*. Many of the towns of India are old, and contain great accumulations of filth, polluting the water in wells which drains through them. Benares is now provided with water direct from the Ganges. The works were opened by Sir Auckland Colvin in 1892.

A good system of drainage is also being carried out. A large central drain, into which smaller ones will flow, will carry off matter which would cause disease.

The *Railway Bridge*, noticed under another head, is also a great improvement.

People.

In 1881 the city and cantonments contained 199,700 inhabitants, including 151,334 Hindus, 47,234 Muhammadans, and 1130 Christians. In 1891, the total population was 219,467. For the number of its inhabitants, it ranks sixth among the cities of India.

The city is a perfect Babel of tongues. Every language spoken, from Cape Comorin to the mountains of Tibet, mingles, more or less, in the noisy confusion on a festival, and almost every Asiatic costume is to be seen.

* Fuller accounts of the two incidents above are given under another head.

A BENARES GENTLEMAN.

A BENARES LADY.

Benares probably contains 30,000 Brahmans. All around seems connected with religion. Bishop Heber says: "Houses occur at every turn adorned with idols, and sending out an unceasing tinkling and strumming of vinas and other discordant instruments; while religious mendicants of every Hindu sect, offering every conceivable deformity, which chalk, cowdung, disease, matted locks, distorted limbs and disgusting and hideous attitudes of penance can show, literally line the principal streets on both sides." The mendicants bawl aloud the names and attributes of all the gods and saints of Hinduism, and beg, in their behalf, for gratuities from all who pass. One is almost deafened by the shouts of *Bam, Bam Mahadeo!* resounding from the water carriers, who bring holy water from every other sacred place, to pour as drink-offerings on the images of the patron deity of Benares.

There is a considerable number of Bengalis. A portion of the city is called Bengali tolah.

Roads and Railways.

Formerly travellers from Bengal entered the city by the Grand Trunk Road. The river was crossed at Rajghat by a ferry when it was in flood; at other times by a bridge of boats. There is now a splendid railway bridge across the river, nearly a mile in length. The people thought that the Ganges would never consent to be bridged; or if so, human sacrifices would be necessary. Passengers and carts pass along the bridge as well as railway trains.

By means of the East India Railway and other lines, Benares communicates with the principal cities of India south of the Ganges; while the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway affords access from the north.

Manufactures.

Macaulay says of Benares: "Nor was superstition the only motive which allured strangers to that great metropolis. Commerce had as many pilgrims as religion. All along the shores of the venerable stream lay great fleets of vessels laden with rich merchandise. From the looms of Benares went forth the most delicate silks that adorned the balls of St. James's and of Versailles; and in the bazars the muslins of Bengal and the sabres of Oudh were mingled with the jewels of Golconda and the shawls of Cashmere."*

Benares is noted for its beautiful enchased brass work. About half the shops in the bazars are devoted to its sale, behind which the craftsmen sit at work. The articles include water vessels, dishes, bowls, candlesticks, lamps, rose-water sprinklers, bells, spoons, and many other domestic or sacred utensils.

The *kincobs*, or gold brocades† of Benares are also celebrated. Rich brocades, wrought with figures of animals in gold and variegated colours, are known as *shikargah*, hunting grounds. *Moon and stars* is another beautiful brocade, figured all over with representations of the heavenly bodies; *ripples of silver, sunshine and shade, pigeons' eyes*, and *peacock's neck*, are other varieties. Some of the brocades are valued at Rs. 900 the square yard.

Children's toys are manufactured in great numbers. They are made of light wood and varnished.

Benares is unrivalled for the variety of its idols and emblems, not only in brass and copper, but in gold and silver. "Brass," says Mr. Caine, "is largely used in their manufacture, alloyed with six other metals, gold, silver, iron, tin, lead and mercury, making with the

* Warren Hastings. † Silk stuffs on which figures are wrought.

copper and zinc of the brass a mixture of 8 metals, which is deemed a perfect alloy, and very highly prized. Idols of pure gold and silver are also made, and great praise is bestowed on those who worship graven images of these precious metals. The larger idols are always cast in moulds, and afterwards finished with the chisel and file. The gold images of Durga, Lakshmi, Krishna, Radha, and Saraswati, kept in private houses and worshipped daily, must not be less than one tola in weight, and they generally weigh three or four tolas. The images of Sitala, the goddess of small-pox, are always of silver, and weigh 10 or 12 tolas. The images of Siva in his *lingam* form are made of an amalgam of mercury and tin, and are esteemed most sacred. They are always very small, and are kept in all houses and used in the daily worship. Stone images are generally worshipped only in the temples; only a few very small ones being found in private houses, the greater number of those used in domestic worship being of the lingam form of Siva. Images of clay are thrown into the river after being worshipped, and have therefore to be renewed daily." Whole streets are devoted to the sale of idols of various kinds. They are not considered sacred till the ceremony of *pran pratishta* has been performed.

Noted Buildings and Palaces.*

Benares contains the usual Government offices. The finest building is the *Government College*, which will be noticed under another head. Next to it ranks the *Prince of Wales Hospital*, built by the wealthy inhabitants of Benares in commemoration of the visit of His Royal Highness to the city in 1876. The *Town Hall* is a fine building, erected at the expense of the late Maharaja of Vizianagram, where the special magistrates hold their courts, and where public and other important meetings are held.

The Maharaja of Vizianagram, besides a house in the Cantonments, has a palace and gardens in the Bhelipur suburb.

As already mentioned, several Indian princes and noblemen have residences facing the river. The palace of Raja Chait Singh is in the south. Through turbans tied together, he descended the steep bank, and escaped by the river. The palace now belongs to the British Government, but for many years it has been the residence of princes of the old imperial house of Delhi, who on account of family troubles, had come to Benares.

Ramnagar.—The palace of the Maharaja of Benares is at Ramnagar, on the opposite bank of the river, about 2 miles above Benares. The house in which he gives entertainments to his European friends is about a mile from Ramnagar-ghat. A town, containing about 12,000 inhabitants, has sprung up at Ramnagar. The Vishnavas sought to build a town on the south-bank of the Ganges as a rival to Benares; but they failed. The Sivites assert that all who die at Ramnagar become asses at their next birth. A pilgrimage to Ramnagar, if performed once a year, will save Hindus from such a transmigration, should they unfortunately die at that place. The Maharaja of Benares, in his last illness, is always carried across the river.

Man-Mandil Observatory.—One of the most remarkable buildings in Benares is the Man-Mandil Observatory, † situated on the bank of the Ganges, near the Man-Mandil Ghat. After Aurangzeb's Mosque, it is the most conspicuous object in the general view of Benares from the river. This building and the ghat below were erected by Man Singh, Raja of Amber, now Jeypore, in Rajputana. He was succeeded by Raja Jai Singh, who was chosen on account of his learning by the emperor Mahomed Shadi to correct the astronomical almanac, then very erroneous. He prepared a new set of tables, calling the work, in honour of his patron "Zeej Mahomed Shahi." Jai Singh was a very enlightened prince. The city of Jeypore, which he founded, has broad straight streets, very unlike those of other Indian cities. He erected five observatories, at Delhi, Muttra, Oojein, Jeypore and Benares.

The telescope and other modern astronomical instruments, were unknown to Jai Singh. He had therefore to use other means. The late learned Pandit Bapu Deva Sastri, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy in the Government College, Benares, wrote an account of the Observatory, from which the following notice is abridged:

The first instrument is a Mural Quadrant. It is a wall about 11 feet high, and 9 feet broad, built in the plane of the meridian. Near its two corners are two iron spikes, the shadows from which at noon show the sun's height in the heaven. By means of this instrument the latitude of the place can also be determined.

* Temples form a separate heading. † A place for observing the heavenly bodies.

Other instruments are a circle built of lime, a circle of stone, and a square built of stone. They were made to ascertain the shadow cast by the sun; but all the marks made over them are now effaced.

The *Yantra Samrat* (the prince of instruments) is a wall 36 feet long, set in the plane of the meridian. The southern end is 6 feet 4¼ inches high, and the northern is 22 feet 3½ inches, sloping gradually upwards and pointing to the Polar star. There are also an Equinoctial circle, made of stone; a movable circle of iron, a pillar of cylindrical form, &c. By means of these the position of any planet or star and the sun can be ascertained.

The divisions and marks of nearly all the instruments are obliterated, and some of them are partly broken. Their places are now supplied by small handy instruments.

A fine view of the city is obtained from the top of the *Yantra Samrat*, nearly equal to that from the minaret of Aurangzeb's Mosque, and without the fatigue.

Garden of Madhu Dass.—This is situated in the western suburbs of the city, in the midst of trees and houses. It is noted for its connexion with two important events. The garden is quadrangular, surrounded by high walls, containing several detached buildings, still standing, but in a ruinous condition. It was occupied by Warren Hastings in 1781, when he ordered Chait Singh to be arrested. He says: "If Chait Singh's people, after they had effected his rescue, had proceeded to my quarters, at Madhu Dass' Garden, instead crowding after him in a tumultuous manner, as they did, in his passage over the river, it is most probable that my blood, and that of about 30 English gentlemen of my party, would have been added to the recent carnage; for they were above 2,000 in number, furious and daring from the easy success of their last attempts, nor could I assemble more than 50 regular and armed sepoys for my defence." After a few days he escaped to Chunar Fort. By the end of the following month, he had defeated the Raja's troops, captured several of his forts, and returned to his old quarters in Benares.

In 1799 another important event occurred. When Vizier Ali, Nawab of Oudh, was deposed, he was ordered to reside in Benares in the house in Madhu Dass's Garden, formerly occupied by Warren Hastings. There he lived in great style, under the charge of Mr. Cherry, the Political Agent of the Governor-General. One morning, early in the year, he went with 200 armed followers to the house of Mr. Cherry, who then resided in what is now the Kachari of the Magistrate of Benares. The parties met in apparent friendship, and the usual compliments were exchanged. Not long afterwards, however, Vizier Ali and his followers suddenly rose up and assassinated Mr. Cherry and his Private Secretary. Captain Conway, an English Officer who happened to ride up, shared the same fate, as did another Englishman, named Graham. The house of Mr. Davis, the Judge, was next attacked. He sent his wife and children to an upper terrace which could be reached only by a very narrow staircase. At the top of the staircase, Mr. Davis, armed with a spear, took his post, and defended it so successfully that the assailants had to retire. This delay enabled troops to be sent to relieve Mr. Davis, and Vizier Ali retired to his own residence. As already described although Vizier Ali escaped for a time, he was retaken, and confined for life in Calcutta.

The house of Mr. Davis in Secrole now belongs to the Maharaja of Benares.

Lat Bhairo.—There is a large square tank at the junction of the Ghazipur road with the Rajghat road. On the left bank of the tank stands a *lât*, or pillar, only a few feet high, covered with copper sheeting. The original pillar was about 40 feet high, and contained inscriptions. In the early part of the present century, in a great riot between the Hindus and Muhammadans, the pillar was partly destroyed. It may have been one of Asoka's pillars, of which several exist. The pillar once stood near a Hindu temple, which was demolished by Aurangzeb, and on its site a mosque was erected. The broken pillar is in charge of a fakir.

Sanskrit Schools and Sanskrit Literature.

Sanskrit Schools.—Benares may be called the Oxford of India. From the earliest times it has been the great seat of Hindu learning. Here Buddha began to "turn the wheel of the law." Here probably, says Bholonath Chunder, did Kapila first enunciate his doctrines of the Sankhya; Yaska probably published his *Nirukta* at this place. Here Shankar Acharya won the great Sivite controversial victory. Here Tulsi Dass, author of the popular Hindu version of the Ramayana, flourished.

Benares has long been noted for its Sanskrit Schools. According to the old system, the

students, instead paying fees, were supported by their teachers. When marriages and other festivals were celebrated, learned men were invited to attend, and were usually accompanied by one or two of their pupils. The presents given on such occasions sufficed for the maintenance of the school. The students were industrious and persevering; Panini's Grammar alone sometimes occupied ten years. It is estimated that there are 200 monastic institutions in Benares to which about 2,000 students from different parts of India resort, in order to be fitted by several years' training in them to be each, in his own neighbourhood, an expounder of Hinduism.

In a lecture in Calcutta, the Rev. H. Whitehead, M. A., thus stated some of the defects of the old system:

"(*i*).—To begin with, it ignores the life and progress of human knowledge. It assumes that man's knowledge is a fossil, which lived some thousands of years ago, but which is now petrified in the dead languages of a past age. It rejects therefore the new light of history, science, and philosophy which is now dawning upon the peoples of the East.

"(*ii*).—Then, again, it gives a one-sided mental culture. It trains to an extraordinary degree the faculty of memory, but it gives a very imperfect training to the faculty of criticism and does not aim at stimulating original thought. Its object is simply to assimilate the thoughts of a bygone age, and not to enable a student to think and judge for himself.

"(*iii*).—And then, lastly, the system is marked by the rigid exclusiveness that has, I venture to think, been the curse of Indian Education from the earliest times. Truth can no more be confined to a favoured few than the air we breathe. And those who endeavour to keep it to themselves are like men who should refuse to breathe the common air that is the property of all mankind and shut themselves up in a vast hermetrically sealed chamber until they languished, fell sick and died simply for the want of fresh air."

On the other hand, Mr. Whitehead laments, under the present system of education, "the loss of that close personal bond which has always existed in India from the remotest ages between the student and his teacher. I do not think that in our Universities it ever occurs to a student that he may be born an ass if he ventures to criticize his professor. A totally different relationship and a totally different sentiment has sprung up on both sides; and I should say most emphatically that the change is not for the better."

In addition to numerous private Sanskrit schools, the following, on a large scale, may be mentioned:

In the Sigra suburb, a Marwari shopkeeper set apart a garden for the residence of about 200 Brahmin students, with sufficient food and fuel to be distributed daily to each resident, and clothing as required.

The Maharaja of Kashmir maintains a Sanskrit school in a splendid building near the Dasasamedh Ghat, with 11 Pandits, and about 200 Brahman students. Some students receive monthly scholarships; others have food supplied to them gratis at the hostel near the school.

The Maharaja of Darbhanga supports a still larger school near the Golden Temple. It is said that 450 students receive scholarships, ranging from Rs. 6 to Re. 1 monthly for their maintenance. The course of study lasts from 4 to 10 years, embracing grammar, rhetoric, astronomy, law, the philosophical systems, and the Vedas.*

In 1792 the British Government founded the Sanskrit College of Benares. The discipline was to be "conformable in all respects to the Dharma Sastra in the chapter on education." The scholars were to be examined 4 times a year in the presence of the Resident, "in all such parts of kowledge as are not held too sacred to be discussed in the presence of any but Brahmans."†

The Sanskrit College is now called the **Queen's College**, and the course of instruction has been, more or less, modified. The building, the finest in Benares, built of Chunar stone, was erected by Major Kittoe. It was completed in 1853 at a cost to Government of Rs. 127,000, besides large sums given by Europeans and Indian gentlemen, whose names are inscribed in the building. The centre tower is 75 feet high; at each corner are smaller towers connected by open arched galleries. There is a beautiful fountain in front. In the garden there is a curious monolith, 31½ feet high, with a Gupta inscription; also an interesting collection of statues and carved stones, brought from Sarnath and other places.

* Sanskrit Schools in Benares, by the Rev. J. Hewlett, M. A.

† Kerr's *Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency*. p. 125.

Queen's College has had several able oriental scholars as Principals and Professors. Among them may be specially mentioned Mr. R. T. H. Griffith, M. A., C. I. E., some of whose translations are noticed below, and the late Bapu Deva Sastri.

The different departments have now the following numbers on their rolls :*

English College	210
Sanskrit College	353
Anglo-Sanskrit College	48
Collegiate School	286
Town School	291
	1188

Sanskrit Literature.—It has been stated that probably the most celebrated works in the Sanskrit language were produced in Benares. For some years the city has been noted for its editions of Sanskrit works, with, in some cases, translations and commentaries. This is largely due to the enterprise and liberality of Dr. E. I. Lazarus, of the Medical Hall Press.

Since 1866, there have been printed 25 volumes of *The Pandit,* a monthly Journal of the Benares College, whose design is thus explained :

"The object of the *Pandit* is to publish rare Sanskrit works which appear worthy of careful re-editing hereafter ; to offer a field for the discussion of controverted points in old Indian Philosophy, Philology, History and Literature ; to communicate ideas between the Aryan scholars of the East and of the West ; between the Pandits of Benares and Calcutta and the Sanskritists of the Universities of Europe."

The subscription is Rs. 9, a year exclusive of postage. A long list of Sanskrit works which have appeared in it can be obtained on application.

The following translations by Mr. Griffith, printed at the Medical Hall Press, will be found of special value :

The RAMAYANA of Valmiki, translated into English verse, complete in 5 vols. cloth bound, Rs. 12½. Postage, &c., Rs. 1¼.

The HYMNS OF THE RIG-VEDA, translated with a popular Commentary in 4 vols. Royal Octavo, cloth bound, Rs. 19. Postage, &c., Rs. 1¼.

The HYMNS OF THE SAMA VEDA, in one volume, cloth bound, Rs. 4 ; stiff covers, cloth back, Rs. 3¼. Postage, &c. 6 As.

In preparation and part in Press :

The HYMNS OF THE ATHARVA VEDA. The work will probably occupy 3 vols., Royal Octavo.

The publications of the Medical Hall Press are not confined to Sanskrit. Among many other works may be mentioned the *Trilingual Dictionary, in English, Urdu and Hindi,* containing 1350 pp. octavo, now offered post-free for Rs. 6. ; Fallon's *Hindustani Dictionaries ;* Bate's *Hindi Dictionary,* &c.

Influence of Sanskrit.—Sanskrit schools are maintained by Hindus as a work of merit, but unless supplemented by Western learning, their effects are injurious. Macaulay truly says in his famous Minute on Education in India :—

"What we spend on the Arabic and Sanskrit Colleges is not merely a dead loss to the cause of truth ; it is bounty money paid to raise up champions of error. It goes to form a nest, not merely of helpless place-hunters, but of bigots prompted alike by passion and interest to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education."

Thirty years later, Sir H. S. Maine, the distinguished successor of Macaulay as Law Member, took the same view. Their united opinion deserves great consideration. In a Calcutta Convocation address the former says :—

"The question has not greatly shifted from the shape in which it presented itself to Lord Macaulay and the founders of modern education in India : that question is whether we are, or are not, asked, under the guise of Oriental culture, to teach that which is not true—false morality, false history, false philosophy, and false physics."

Babu Bholonath Chunder has the following remarks on this subject :

"The Hindu wants to *advance,*—which is the watchword of Europe ; but Sanskrit would keep him in the rear of nations, and hold his mind in bondage to antiquated notions. Sanskrit belongs to the age of the bow and arrow—and of travelling in caravans. English belongs to the age of Armstrong (guns), Railways, and Electric Telegraphs. We do not

*From a statement kindly furnished by the Principal, W. H. Wright, Esq.

want to uphold the geography of the Golden Meru and Seas of Butter; but to know the use of the mariner's compass and steer upon the ocean. We do not want dreamy religious speculations; but practical energy and matter-of-fact knowledge. We want to be men of the 19th century, and to be admitted into the comity of civilized nations. Unquestionably, it is through the agency of English that this object can ever be hoped to be accomplished."*

The effects of a purely Sanskrit education are best seen in the Pandits fed from their childhood on Sanskrit. Their heads are stuffed full of false geography, false astronomy, false history, false morality, false religion. As a rule they on the most bigoted portion of the community, most narrow-minded, and opposed to all reform. In 1889 a "Native Thinker" "hoped that a friend would lose no time in devising some scheme by which the priests and pundits may be enabled to learn as much, at least, as a boy of ten years attending a regular school is familiar with."

A few should study Sanskrit thoroughly. Scholars are required like Dr. Bhandarkar, Mr. R. C. Dutt, and others, to investigate Indian history and philosophy. University graduates should also have some knowledge of the language; but *purely* Sanskrit schools and others in which only a smattering of the language is acquired, do more harm than good.

Bholonath Chunder also puts the case briefly thus: "Sanskrit is romance; English is bread." A noted Benares Pandit said to the writer, that he had sent his son to learn English, as Sanskrit now brought "neither honour nor profit."

Fruits of Hindu Philosophy.—For more than twenty centuries this has formed the chief study in Benares, and publications on the subject form a large proportion of Sanskrit literature. Bishop Caldwell thus tests its results :—

"Has it promoted popular education, civilization, and good government? Has it educated the people in generous emotions? Has it abolished caste or even mitigated its evils? Has it obtained for widows the liberty of remarriage? Has it driven away dancing girls from the temples? Has it abolished polygamy? Has it repressed vice and encouraged virtue? Was it this philosophy which abolished female infanticide, the meriah sacrifice, and the burning of widows? Is it this which is covering the country with a network of railways and telegraphs? Is it this which has kindled amongst the native inhabitants of India the spirit of improvement and enterprise which is now apparent? Need I ask the question? All this time the philosophy of quietism has been sound asleep or 'with its eyes fixed on the point of its nose,' according to the directions of the Gita, it has been thinking itself out of its wits. This philosophy has substantially been the creed of the majority of the people for upwards of two thousand years; and if it had emanated from God, the proofs of its divine origin ought long ere this to have been apparent; but it has all this time been too much absorbed in 'contemplating self' by means of self to have had any time or thought left for endeavoring to improve the world. What could be expected of the philosophy of apathy, but that it should leave things to take their course? There is much real work now being done in India in the way of teaching truth, putting down evil, and promoting the public welfare; but that work is being done, not by Vedantists or quietists of any school, but by Christians from Europe whose highest philosophy is to do good, and by those Natives of India who have been stimulated by the teaching and example of Europeans to choose a similar philosophy."

He adds that the following remarks of Macaulay on the Stoical Philosophy of the Ancients, in his Essay on Lord Bacon, apply with equal truth to Hindu philosophy:

"The ancient philosophy was a treadmill, not a path. It was made up of revolving questions, of controversies which were always beginning again. It was a contrivance for having much exertion and no progress. It might indeed sharpen and invigorate the brains of those who devoted themselves to it; but such disputes could add nothing to the stock of knowledge. There was no accumulation of truth, no heritage of truth acquired by the labour of one generation and bequeathed to another, to be again transmitted with large additions to a third.

"The same sects were still battling with the same unsatisfactory arguments, about the same interminable questions. There had been plenty of ploughing, harrowing, reaping, threshing. But the garners contained only smut and stubble.

* *Travels of a Hindu*, Vol. I. pp. 277—279.

"Words and more words, and nothing but words, had been all the fruit of all the toil of all the most renowned sages of sixty generations. The ancient philosophers promised what was impracticable; they despised what was practicable; they filled the world with long words and long beards; and they left it as wicked and ignorant as they found it."

Female Education.

This was commenced by Missions, and is still chiefly carried on by them, but the girls' schools maintained by the Maharaja of Vizianagram deserve separate notice. About 600 girls receive a good education. A series of books in Hindi was published for their use. They are under the superintendence of Dr. Lazarus, the Agent at Benares of the Maharaja.

Christian Missions.

The Baptist Missionary Society was the first to occupy Benares. In 1816 the Rev. W. Smith was appointed, and continued at his post for forty years. Among his successors may be specially mentioned the Rev. John Parsons, an excellent Hindi scholar, and the Rev. H. Heinig who spent 42 years in Benares preaching the Gospel. The Society of late has been concentrating its Missionaries, and at present Benares is unoccupied except by lady-workers.

The Mission of the Church Missionary Society was commenced in 1817 through the Rev. Daniel Corrie, a Chaplain, afterwards Bishop of Madras. Raja Jay Narayan, in gratitude for restoration to health, established and endowed a school. As it did not prosper, in 1818 he handed it over with all its endowments through Mr. Corrie to the Church Missionary Society. The same year the Society appointed Mr. Adlington to be its head-master; but the Rev. Thomas Morris, the first ordained English Missionary, did not arrive till 1821. When a new school house was erected in 1842, the number of pupils was 153. The school is now called Jay Narayan's College. The Principal is the Rev. B. Davis, M.A. The number on the rolls is 610. There are several other schools connected with the Mission in Benares.

Among the Church Missionaries, the Rev. W. Smith and the Rev. C. B. Lenpolt each spent about forty years in the city. Pandit Nehemiah Goreh, noted for his learned *Rational Refutation of Hindu Philosophy*, was a convert of this Mission.

The head-quarters of the Church Mission are at the suburb of Sigra. Bholonath Chunder says that it was "once the scene of Thug murders and robberies. Long did way-farers pass it with a shudder after sunset. In the Church compound is pointed out a deep well into which the bodies of the victims used to be thrown."*

The Rev. M. T. Adam commenced in 1820 the Mission of the London Society. Among the later missionaries may be mentioned the Rev. James Kennedy, who laboured here for many years; the Rev. M. A. Sherring, author of *The Sacred City of the Hindus*, and the Rev. J. Hewlett, a scholarly man, whose translations are much admired. The Society has a High School, under the Rev. A. Parker, with 263 scholars in the English Department and 54 in the Vernacular Department. The other schools of the Mission contain 1462 pupils.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society began work in Benares in 1879, but its efforts are largely confined to European soldiers.

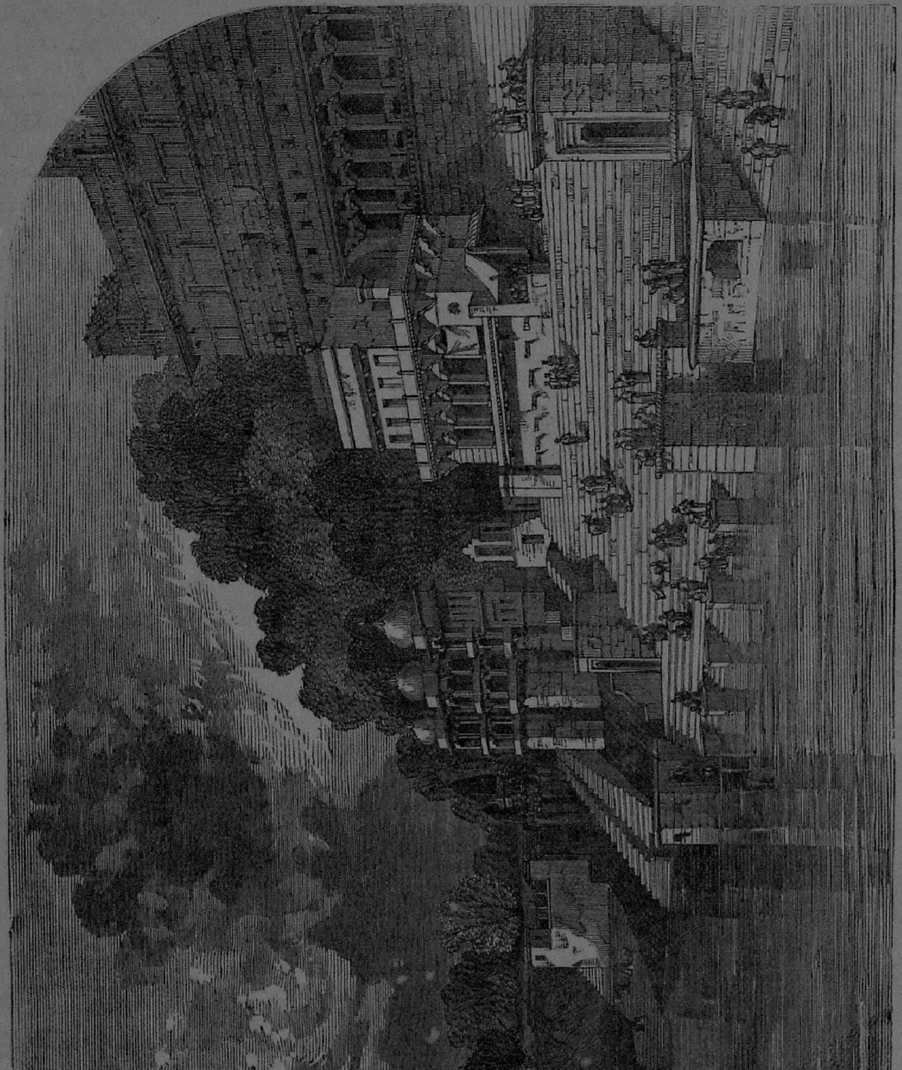
There are several lady-workers connected with the Missions who teach in Zenanas and superintend girls' schools. A considerable number are thus instructed.

Ghats.

Ghats are one of the chief features of Benares. The city stands on a cliff about a hundred feet above the river. To facilitate bathing, there are numerous flights of steps, called *ghats*, leading down to the Ganges. They can best be seen from a boat sailing down the stream. At sunrise the scene is very animated. Men, women, and children are pouring down the ghats, and bathing in the yellow water for refreshment and as a religious act. Some carry vessels of the sacred water for purifying purposes at home. In the evening they are often frequented to enjoy the cool air from the river. All day long, also, the ghats are crowded with ash-besprinkled and almost naked ascetics. Interspersed there are lofty buildings, some of them entitled to be called palaces. Their numerous small windows, their rich and varied carving, their balconies and flat roofs, give them a very eastern look.

* *Travels of a Hindu*, Vol., I. p. 283.

About 50 principal ghats are enumerated. Some of them descend from the very top to the bottom of the river, so as to suit conveniently for bathing, whether the water be high or low; others have sloping banks leading some way down before the masonry begins; and



DASASAMEDH GHAT.

some of them do not go sò far into the river as others. One of them is said to have nearly 300 stone steps. At most of those used by the Hindus, no Muhammadans are allowed to bathe, but at the minor ones the people are mixed. There are several large ghats, however, that belong exclusively to the Musalmans, who, in their turn, of course exclude the Hindus. If the Brahman, on the one hand, would be polluted by the touch of a Muhammadan, the latter would regard himself equally so, by coming in contact with an idolater, especially while engaged in performing his religious rites."*

Some of the principal ghats will now be noticed. The small stream Asi may be considered the southern boundary of the city and its suburbs. Near it is the Durga Kund Temple, which will afterwards be described. The ASI SANGAM GHAT, at the junction of the Asi and the Ganges, is one of the five sacred bathing-places.

Sailing down the river, the TULSI, GANESH, SHIVALA and DUNDI GHATS are successively passed. Near the CHAUKI GHAT is the principal place where *Nag-puja* is performed. Under a pipul tree there is a large number of idols and figures of snakes. Near the Bengali tolah is the KIDAR GHAT, frequented by Bengalis.

The AMRIT RAO GHAT leads up to a large *serai*, built by Raja Amrit Rao. RANA GHAT leads to the palace of the Rana of Udaipur, in Rajputana; MUNSHI GHAT to the palace built by a Dewan of the Raja of Nagpur. The SITALA GHAT leads up to one of the temples of Sitala, the small-pox goddess.

Next is the DASASAMEDH GHAT, another of the five celebrated bathing places.

The legend is that Divodas, king of Kasi, expelled all the gods from the city, Siva amongst them. Siva tried in vain to get news of his city. All whom he sent to bring tidings were so enchanted with its beauty, that they would not return. At last Brahma was persuaded to go. Here he offered ten sacrifices, at each of which a horse was consumed: hence the name, the ten horse sacrifice Ghat. Brahma constituted the Ghat the prince of places of pilgrimage, equal to Prayag, the confluence of the Ganges and Jumna at Allahabad. He is also said to have been so pleased with Benares, that he did not return to Siva, but waited his arrival.

In the latter half of the month Jeth, many persons bathe at this Ghat. For 15 days the bathing and practice of religious ceremonies continue. The virtue of each day is supposed to increase in an arithmetical series. The virtue acquired on the 15th day is 15 times as great as that acquired on the 1st. The aggregate virtue acquired by bathing the entire 15 days, consequently amounts to the value of 120 days.

Boats bringing Chunar stone to Benares often unload their cargoes at this Ghat.

Near the Ghat is a large lingam, a black stone 5 or 6 feet in girth, and 3 or 4 feet in height, called Dasaswamedheswar. It is claimed that whoso worships it will escape all future transmigrations, and go straight to the heaven of Siva.

A little beyond the Dasasamedh Ghat is the MAN-MANDIL GHAT, leading up to the Observatory already described.

Lower down the river are the BURNING GHAT and the MANIKARNIKA GHAT near each other.

The Burning Ghat is considered the most sacred place in India for burning the dead. As the space is small, only one or two can be burned at once. Bodies awaiting their turns are laid in the Ganges.

It is a curious superstition that no Hindu burnt here can expect to reach heaven unless the fire employed for the funeral pile is taken from the house of a *domrá*, the lowest and most despised caste in India. During his life, a Hindu dare not take fire from a *domrá* to cook his food; but after death the relatives beg the *domrá* to furnish fire to burn their deceased relative's body. A Hindu prince gave Rs. 1,000 for fire. The *domrá* who holds the monopoly at this ghat is a very wealthy man.

The tomb-like erections, seen near the bottom of the picture, on the right,† are memorial stones, showing that here widows were burnt alive with the bodies of their husbands. These *sati* stones are found along the whole range of the ghats, but they are more plentiful here.

The Manikarnika Ghat, just beyond the Burning Ghat leads up to the Manikarnika Well. The large temple in the picture to the right is above it.

The Manikarnika Ghat is the most important of the bathing places. From it pilgrims start when making the circuit of the Panch Kosi Road. The Ghat also marks the centre of the city. If divided into two portions at this place, they would be nearly equal in extent.

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* Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India.* p. 272.

† See Next Page.

THE BURNING GHAT, WITH SATI STONES (TO THE RIGHT.)

Near to the Manikarnika Ghat is SINDHIA'S GHAT, built by the widow of Dowlat Rao Sindhia of Gwalior. Some of the stones are of immense size. Before the Ghat could be completed, it began to sink. There is a great rent from top to bottom. In some places the stones are more than two feet apart. As step by step gradually disappears, it is still slowly sinking. Near it is the RAJA OF NAGPUR'S GHAT.

At the PANCHGANGA GHAT five rivers are supposed to meet underground, although the Ganges is the only one visible. The names of the other four rivers are Dhutapapa, Jarnada, Karanadi, and Saraswati. The gods are said to bathe at this spot during their residence in Benares. Hindus are prepared to believe what is directly contrary to the evidence of their senses.

The DURGA GHAT comes next. Beyond is the Cow GHAT, so called from the stone figure of a cow. It is the drinking place of many of the sacred cattle which frequent the city.

The TRILOCHANA GHAT is another of the five sacred ghats. The name means "three-eyed," and refers to Siva. Various explanations are given of his third eye. The Mahabharata relates that it burst forth from Siva's forehead with a great flame when his wife playfully

placed her hands over his eyes after he had been engaged in austerities in the Himalayas. This eye is considered very destructive. It is said to have reduced Kama, the god of love, to ashes. Every pilgrim seeks to bathe in the water between the two turrets of this ghat, which is supposed to possess special sanctity.

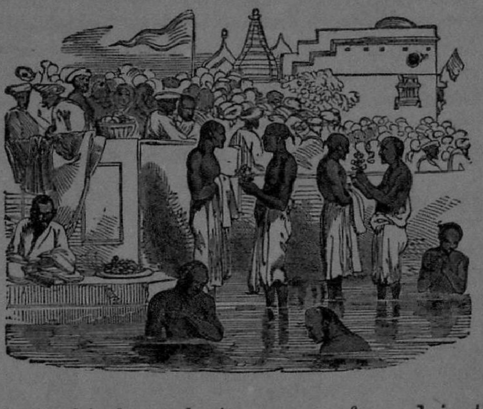
RAJ GHAT is near the Railway Bridge. Formerly people crossed by a bridge of boats, or by ferry when the river was in flood. Here the grand Trunk Road to Calcutta crosses over, and is continued to the North-Western Provinces.

A little above Raj Ghat the numerous vessels trading in grain used to land their cargoes, and the adjacent part of the city was largely occupied by grain dealers. Railways have greatly reduced the traffic on the river.

Below Raj Ghat the Barna joins the Ganges. The junction, called the BARNA SANGAM, is the last of the five sacred bathing places. The others are the Asi Sangam; Dasasamedh Ghat, Manikarnika Ghat, Panchganga Ghat, and the Trilochana Ghat.

BATHING IN THE GANGES.

Religiousness of the Hindus.—"The Hindu," says Sherring, "is in his own fashion a religious man of very great earnestness; but his religion takes the form of idolatry. Idolatry enters into all the associations and concerns of his life. He can take no step without it. He carries his offerings publicly in the streets, on his way to the temple in the morning, and receives upon his forehead from the officiating priest, the peculiar mark of his god, as the symbol of the worship he has paid him, which he wears all the day long. As he walks about, you may hear him muttering the names, and sounding the praises of his gods. In greeting a friend, he accosts him in the name of a deity. In a letter on business or on any other matter the first word he invariably writes is the name of a god. Should he propose an engagement of importance, he first inquires the pleasure of the idol, and a lucky day for observing it. At his birth his horoscope is cast; when he is ill the gods must be propitiated; when he is burned the idol must be remembered; at his death his funeral rites are performed in the name of one or more deities."



When passing along the streets, some may be seen bowing their heads or folding their hands before the sacred objects that line the way. Every now and then one of a party will raise the shout *Mahadevjí Kí jai*, "Victory to the Great God," or Siva. The shout is taken up and repeated till the street resounds.

It has been said of the Hindu that he eats religiously, drinks religiously, bathes religiously, dresses religiously, and *sins* religiously. At Benares this religiousness specially takes the form of bathing in the Ganges.

Children are often bathed simply for cleanliness. They are plumped over head and ears, and then scrubbed with the sandy mud of the river as a substitute for soap. As soon as they escape, they run up the banks, and dry themselves in the warm rays of the sun, and look down on their parents who now proceed with their own ablutions.

Supposed Efficacy of Bathing.—Religious bathing is called *snán,* and is distinguished from ordinary bathing for purposes of cleanliness, though both are usually combined by those who live near the Ganges or other sacred streams. It may be observed in other places, or in other rivers than the Ganges, but it is claimed that the Ganges is more holy than all other rivers, and most holy of all at Benares. A large list, however, of some hundreds of such places exist, and the virtues of each are so glowingly described, that it would be difficult to decide which of them promises to pilgrims the greatest blessings, either temporal or spiritual. The waters of some of these places of resort are peculiarly purifying only on certain days, or during certain seasons of the year; but at Benares they are always of peculiar and certain efficacy, in purifying from sin; while during certain great festivals, and especially during eclipses of the sun and moon, and at certain other junctions of the heavenly bodies, very extraordi-

nary benefits are to be obtained by bathing in the Ganges, especially at certain ghats of the holy city. These benefits are secured by all the worshippers, not merely for themselves and their children, but also for their ancestors for many generations back; who either still animate other forms upon earth, or are now existing in the unseen world.

Gunga Putras.—A class of Brahmans, said to consist of several thousands, usually called *Gunga Putras,* "sons of the Ganges," obtain their living about the ghats by directing and assisting pilgrims, especially strangers, in performing their devotions; and by taking care of their clothes, &c., when they go into the sacred stream. These, of course, are very loud in the praise of Gunga, as divine and all-purifying, in order to induce the people to come often and from far, to swell the amount of their own gains, as, without their assistance ceremonies of importance cannot be performed. Hundreds, also, of other Brahmans, more or less connected with the principal temples, but often not professing to be so, lounge constantly about the ghats, to pick up strangers to whom they offer their services as guides through the intricacies of the city, to the most holy places necessary to be visited. Many of the pilgrims, being simple country people, are astonished at every thing they see, and easily gulled into the belief of the wonders and miracles pretended to be of almost daily occurrence.

Mode of Bathing.—Immediately above the water there are platforms, some with huge stationary umbrellas, where Brahmas sit muttering mantras or to assist pilgrims in their devotions. The umbrellas can be seen in the frontispiece on the margin of the river.

In the early morning when the sun has just risen, and is shedding its bright rays on the river and city, it looks as if all the inhabitants had made their way to the sacred stream. The most respectable Brahman ladies generally bathe even before sunrise to avoid the crowds who then assemble. Thousands of men, women and children are to be seen, of every age and condition of life. Old and infirm persons, carried in palanquins, or in small litters, or beds swung from a bamboo on the shoulders of bearers, are brought to the margin of the river, and there their feeble steps are supported by their friends, to enable them to dip their emaciated bodies in the holy Gunga—to do which they have, some of them at least, been carried a journey of many days.

Many of the ghats are occupied exclusively by Brahmans, the men taking one side, and the women the other.

While bathing in the Ganges, both sexes retain such clothing as is necessary for purposes of decency. After having finished their ablutions, and before coming out of the water, they slip a clean dry garment over the one in which they have bathed which they loosen and let fall under the clean one, while they are in the act of fastening it, or tightening it round their bodies. In coming out of the water, they generally stop some time at its edge, where they wash the garments they have taken off, and then carry them home, wet in their hand to be dried in their houses. Every time, therefore, when they bathe, they put on clean clothing, though, among the lower orders, all the washing which their simple and scanty garments receive, consists often of no more than a few dips in the river and a little twisting and wringing.

The custom here of putting on dry clothes before leaving the water, is different from that common in Bengal, where both men and women usually walk home with their wet garments on. This habit is very inconsistent with female delicacy; and is regarded as such by the women of Hindustan, who are much more careful in covering their persons than those of Bengal. Walking with wet clothes, especially if exposed to a cold wind or to the sun, is also apt to bring on an attack of fever.

In bathing in the Ganges, the women as well as the men mutter their mantras; but there is sometimes a strange admixture of devotion, with all sorts of talking,

A BRAHMAN WORSHIPPING THE SUN.

laughing, and joking, with here and there parties employing all the strength of their lungs, in pouring on each other volleys of abuse.

On entering the water of the Ganges for devotional purposes, if in the morning, the Brahman first turns his face to the rising sun, and at other times, to that part of the heaven where the sun may be. He then unites both his hands together, so as to form a sort of cup, in which he raises as much water as he can and presents it to the sun, towards whom he addresses the Gayatri. This prayer, taken from the third Mandala of the Rig Veda, is as follows:

Tat Sivitur Vareṉyam bhargo devasya dhímohi!
dhiyo yo naḥ prachodyát. iii. 62, 10.

It has been variously translated. Griffith renders it thus:

"May we attain that excellent glory of Savitur the god:
So may he stimulate our prayers."

Wilson says that it was "in its original use, a simple invocation of the sun to shed a benignant influence upon the customary offices of worship." It is thus extolled in the Skanda Purana:

"Nothing in the Vedas is superior to the Gayatri. No invocation is equal to the Gayatri, as no city is equal to Benares. The Gayatri is the mother of the Vedas and of Brahmans. By repeating it a man is saved. What is there indeed that cannot be effected by the Gayatri? For the Gayatri is Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva, and the three Vedas."

After repeating the Gayatri, the Brahman, when bathing, turns slowly round, keeping his face at first to the sun, and then following his course in the heavens, till he has described a complete circle, when he stops with his face towards him again. He then dips his head several times under water and continues to repeat mantras—one for every member of the body, as he applies the water to each part separately, and especially to all the organs of sense, and apertures of the body. Another mantra is repeated when he washes the Brahmanical cord, which must be kept on, during his devotions, at certain parts of which it must be suspended from his right ear.

Sometimes the bather breathes heavily. This is to drive away the demons who haunt even this sacred spot. More merit is supposed to be gained by holding the head for a long time under water. This is occasionally done almost to the point of suffocation.

When the bathing is over, a small brass vessel is filled with Ganges water which is taken to be poured out in honour of a favourite idol. The very devout sometimes visit as many as thirty temples of a morning.

Every Brahman ought to bathe five times a day, but very few of them come up to this number. A great many content themselves with once a day.

In certain places pundits read and explain the Ramayana, Mahabbharat, &c., to a crowd of people, many of whom are women. Sentence by sentence is read from poetical translations made long ago, which require to be retranslated into the ordinary language of the people to be generally intelligible. These men are rewarded with a respectful and attentive hearing, and with something more substantial when the work is over.

Bathing at Eclipses.—Immense multitudes assemble at Benares from all quarters on the eve of an eclipse of the moon, to bathe at the moment when it takes place, during which the greatest blessings may be obtained. All the roads are crowded, and even every path leading to the city, swarms with all classes of people, hurrying along, to be in time to get a station sufficiently near the sacred streams, to enable them to plunge in the moment the eclipse is either seen to begin, or reported to have commenced, though not visible. Now great numbers come by rail. The trains with pilgrims at the chief festivals are so long and crowded, as to be often late.

Nearly all the day previous to the eclipse the groups pouring into the city present the most lively scene. The people, from one place generally keep together: the women especially, of the nearer towns and villages, sing in full chorus as they trudge along in large bands. Their songs usually refer to the occasion of the monster Rahu attempting to devour the moon. The following is a specimen:—

"The round full moon in the east shines bright,
O'er the glancing waves plays her golden light.
But at midnight hour she will fade from our sight;
And darkness speed o'er the Gunga.
Come old, come young, let us join in the song,
And all trip along to the Gunga.

For Ráhu's jaws are extended wide,
O'er Kashi's spires he frowns in his pride,
So leave your homes, whatever betide,
And all hie away to the Gunga.
Come old, come young, let us join in the song,
And all trip along to the Gunga.

In the evening of the expected eclipse, the whole bank of the river and ghats in front of the city, present a very remarkable and animated scene. For several miles every inch of ground is covered by one dense mass of human beings, waiting for the moment when the monster Rahu will make his expected attempt to swallow the moon. At last it comes, and then all the bells at once ring out, every gong is sounded, every drum is beat, and the voices of hundreds of thousands ascend in one deafening shout of 'Gunga mái kí jái!' Victory to mother Ganges! while the vast multitudes rush simultaneously into the river, to get the virtue of its holy water at this auspicious moment. The banks and ghats are here convenient for the purpose, as they all slope gradually into the stream. Still, however, accidents sometimes take place, however carefully the public authorities may make police arrangements to guard against them."*

TEMPLES AND SACRED WELLS.

It may be said of Benares, like Athens of old, that it is "wholly given to idolatry," and that it contains more idols than human beings. In some places there are great accumulations of images.

The temples also are almost numberless, though some of them are very diminutive. Raja Man Singh, of Jeypore, wishing to present a lakh of temples to the city, made the stipulation that they were all to be commenced and finished in one day. The plan hit upon was to cut out in blocks of stone a great many tiny carvings, each one representing a temple. The separate blocks, therefore, on the work being completed, exhibited from top to bottom and on all sides a mass of miniature temples. These blocks are still to be seen in various parts of Benares.

But there are numerous temples more deserving of the name. As already mentioned, Ala-ud-din, about 1300 A. D., is said to have destroyed about a thousand temples; but they so multiplied again that they rose to about 1500. Jehangir, the fourth Mogul emperor (1605-27), in his memoirs describes Benares as a "city of temples." These again, in their turn, were levelled by Aurungzeb (1658-1707). A third time they raised their heads, and their number is now estimated at 1550, besides very numerous smaller shrines.

The largest temples in Benares were demolished by the Muhammadans. Those existing are much inferior in size to some of the temples in South India. But though small, the Benares temples are generally solidly built of hewn stone, and some of them are richly carved. Siva's temples are surmounted by his trident. Many have a pole at their side with a flag attached to it.

The temples are generally situated either along the bank of the river or a little inland; some of them are clustered together. They will be described in alphabetical order, as easiest for reference.

AHMETY TEMPLE.—This is a fine temple of red coloured stone, built some years ago by the Raja of Ahmety. It stands above the Manikarnika Well. It is the temple to the right in the picture at page 16.

ANNAPURNA.—The name means "full of food." The goddess is a form of Durga. Her temple is not far from the Golden Temple. It is said to have been built about 1725 A. D. by a Poona Raja. It has a tower and a dome, and there are four shrines within the temple, dedicated to the Sun, Ganesh, Gauri Shankar, and Hanuman. The goddess is considered the patroness of beggars and the poor. She undertakes the task of feeding the hungry by giving a handful of soaked grain to every applicant, the latter engaging to supply a vessel full of Ganges water. Groups of beggars sit in front of the gate with their bowls, to catch the pinches of grain thrown in by passing worshippers. Inside the temple there are numbers of sacred bulls and cows, some of them horribly diseased, which are fed by pious devotees who resort to Annapurna's shrine.

* This chapter is chiefly taken from Buyers, *Recollections of Northern India.*

The Romans had a goddess whom they called Anna Perenna. Sherring thus describes a worshipper at this temple. "One day on entering the court yard of the temple, my attention was arrested by an aged woman, seated on the ground in front of a small clay figure which she had, with her own hands manufactured that morning, and to which she was solemnly paying homage. Close by was a brazen vessel containing water into which every now and then she dipped a small spoon, and then gently poured a few drops upon the head of the image. She then reverently folded her hands, and muttered words of prayer, occasionally moving one hand to her face, and with finger and thumb compressed her two nostrils, in order that holding her breath as far as possible, she might increase the merit of her worship and the efficacy of her prayer. Having completed her devotions, she rose, took the image she had worshipped in her hand, and threw it away as of no further use."*

Barahan Devi.—In a lane leading into a street near the Man-Mandil Ghat, is the shrine of this goddess, who is worshipped in the morning. She is supposed to heal all her worshippers who suffer from a swelling in the hands or feet.

Bhaironath.—This temple is upwards of a mile north of the Golden Temple, and not far from the Town Hall. The god is supposed to be the *Kotwal*, or police magistrate, of Benares, and its suburbs as far as the Panch Kosi road. Within this limit, under his master Bisheshwar, he exercises authority over gods and men. It is his special duty to expel evil spirits. He himself is guarded by a huge dog, although it is said to enable him to indulge occasionally in riding exercise. The sweetmeat sellers in the neighbourhood make sugar images of the dog which are offered to this idol.

The god is armed with an enormous stone club, called *Dandpan*, from *danda*, a stick. It is about 4 feet in height, with a small silver face at the thin end. This stick has been commanded to beat every disturber of the peace. It is specially worshipped on Tuesday and Sunday. Three bells hang in front of the stick, and on one side sits a priest, with a rod made of peacock's feathers. In the name of Dandpan, he gently taps the worshippers with this rod, which punishment is considered sufficient to absolve them from all their sins.

Bisheshwar.—This name applied to Siva, means "lord of all." The whole city is supposed to be dedicated to Siva, and to rest on the point of his trident. He is supposed to be king over all the other deities as well as the inhabitants residing within the limits of the Panch Kosi road. Every matter of importance is supposed to be brought to the notice of Siva by his Kotwal Bhaironath. The idols placed along the road are supposed to act as chankidars or watchmen.

The temple was erected by Ahalya Bai, Maharani of Indore. It stands in the midst of a quadrangle, covered in with a roof. Over it are a tower, and dome and a spire. The tower and dome glitter in the sun like masses of burnished gold, and on this account it is called the Golden Temple. It is merely gilded with gold leaf spread over plates of copper, overlying the stones beneath. The expense was met by Ranjit Singh in his last illness, in the vain hope of prolonging his life.

The tower is 51 feet in height. Outside the enclosure is a large collection of idols, raised upon a platform, and called "The Court of Mâhadev." They are chiefly male and female emblems. Other idols are built into the wall flanking this court. They were probably taken from the ruins of the old temple of Bisheshwar, destroyed by Aurangzeb, which stood to the north-west of the present building. Extensive remains of the old temple are still visible. They form a large portion of the western wall of the mosque which was built on its site.

Under the dome is a belfry, in which 9 bells are suspended. These are so low that they can be tolled by those who frequent the temple. One of them, of elegant workmanship, was presented by the Raja of Nepal.

Between the mosque and the Golden Temple is a court yard, in the centre of which is the Gyan Bapi, or Gyan Kup, "Well of Knowledge," in which it is fabled that Siva resides. It is said that when the old temple of Bisheshwar was destroyed, the priest took the chief idol and threw it down the well for safety. The well is surrounded by a roofed colonnade of about 40 beautiful pillars, erected in 1828 by the widow of Doulat Rao Sindhia of Gwalior.

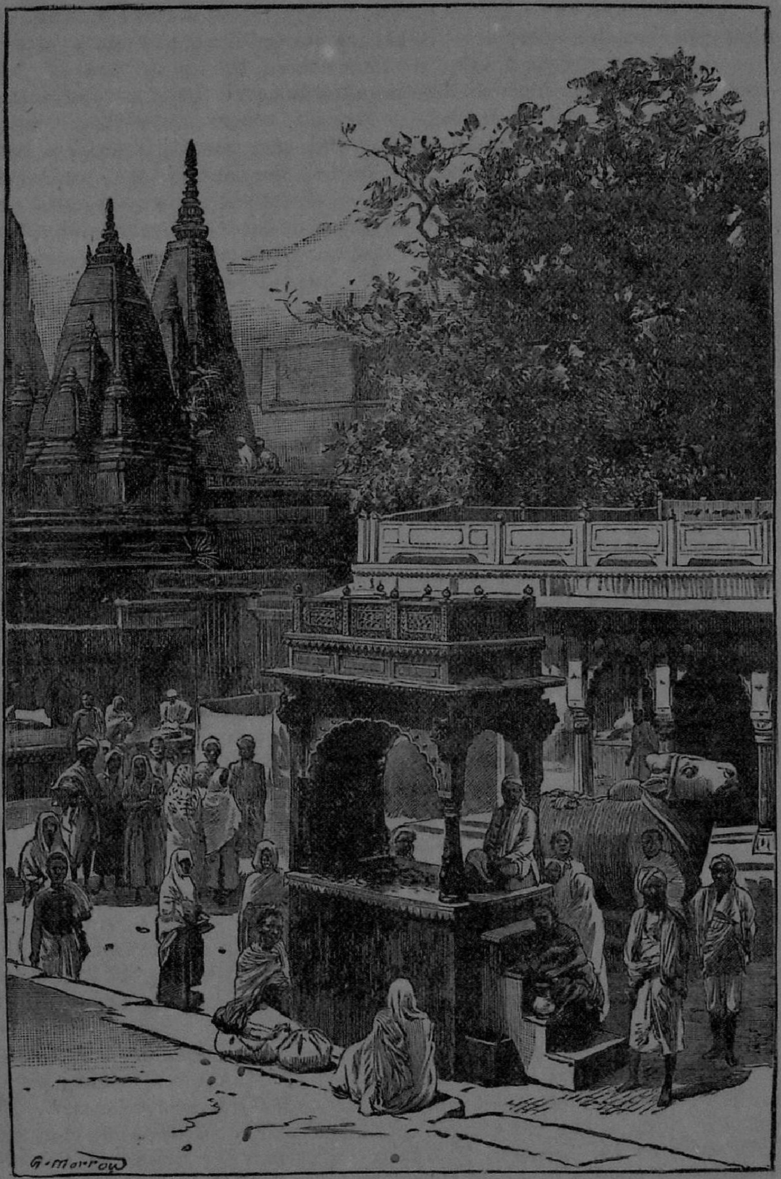
The well is now covered except a small portion. The water is filthy and putrid from the rotted flowers thrown into the well by those who resort to the shrine. Every pilgrim drinks a little handed to him in a sort of ladle by one of the attendant priests. On payment, the priest also repeats a mantra.

* *The Sacred City of the Hindus.*

To the east of the colonnade there is a stone bull, about 7 feet high, the gift of the Raja of Nepal. Near it is a temple of Siva, built by a Hyderabad Rani.

Bridhkal.—This temple which is very ancient, had formerly twelve courts; now there are only seven, in a somewhat ruinous condition. The legend is that it was built in the Satya Yug by a very aged Raja, who, though sickly, was very diligent in the performance of his religious rites. As a reward, Mahadev not only restored him to health, but caused him to become a young man. In gratitude, the Raja built this temple, which Mahadev consecrated with his presence, and granted two boons to those worshipped Bridhkal,—the healing of every kind of disease and long life.

Dalbhyeswar.—This temple stands in a lane leading from the Man-Mandil Ghat. Like Indra in the Vedas, the deity here worshipped is supposed to be able to send rain. To induce him to do so, his image is placed low down in a cistern in the centre of the temple, and kept drenched with water. When this does not succeed; some worshippers of such deities expose them to the sun.

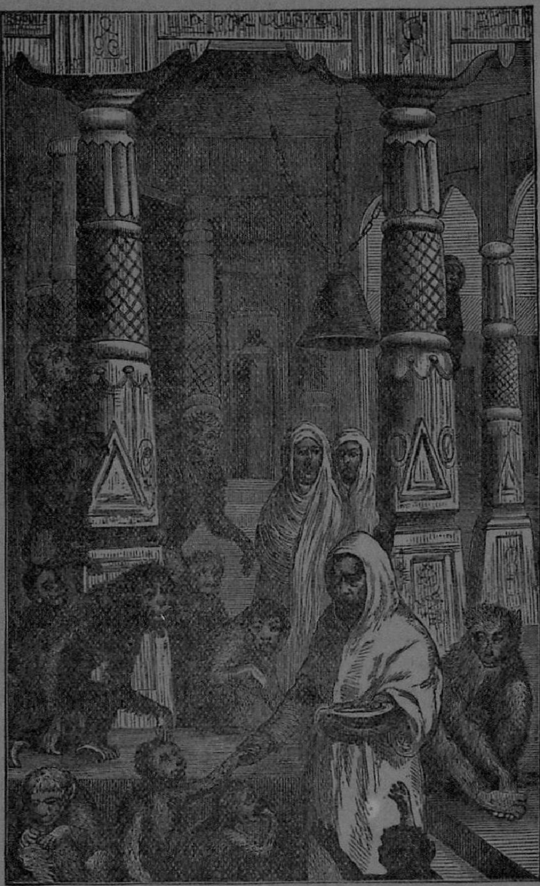


BISHESHWAR TEMPLE.

(The Bull and the Colonnade over the well are seen to the right.)

Dalbhyeswar is also known as the "Poor Man's Friend." It is supposed that any such person visiting the shrine and performing the prescribed ceremonies, will soon have his wants relieved.

Durga.—This is usually known to Europeans as the *Monkey Temple*, on account of the monkeys found there. It stands to the south of the city, not very far from the Asi Sangam Ghat. The temple, built of stone, richly carved, was erected by a Bengali lady, the Rani Bhawani. As the goddess is supposed to delight in blood, there is a stake in front to which animals are fastened and sacrificed. Goats are generally offered. After the head has been cut off, and some blood presented, the body is taken away by the worshipper. As the Sastras allow animals offered in sacrifice to be eaten, Hindus desirous of a flesh meal bring a goat or a kid, although others have different motives. On Tuesday the temple is crowded.



THE MONKEY TEMPLE.

The monkeys scamper over the tops of the houses, and wherever their fancy leads them, sitting on walls and many other places from which they may watch their opportunities for stealing the property of their human fellow-creatures. They are revered as representatives of the god Hanuman, and are fed with various kinds of grain, distributed by the worshippers as a work of great merit. When any person scatters grain, crying out *ao, ao,* 'come, come,' the monkeys soon collect in numbers.

On account of the mischief done by the monkeys, some years ago a Magistrate of Benares removed a large number of them to the jungles.

Adjoining the temple there is a fine *Kund*, or tank, much used for bathing.

GANESA.—This temple is above the Manikarnika Ghat. The image, painted red, has three eyes; the head is covered with silver, and ornamented with a garland. The trunk is concealed by a cloth. At the foot of the idol is a rat, on which the god is supposed to ride. On either side of the inner shrine is a statue of a woman, one named Siddhi, and the other Buddhi.

GANESA.

GOPAL MANDIR.—This temple, close to that of Bhaironath, is the richest temple in Benares for furniture and jewels. It contains two gold images of Krishna.

KAL KUP, the "Well of Fate" is near the Gopal Mandir. A square hole in the roof brings the rays of the sun upon the water exactly at noon. At this hour numbers come to ascertain their future. If a man is unable to perceive his shadow in the water, it is believed that he will die within six months. As railway time, kept in Benares, is different from local time, a mistake is sometimes made, and the shadow is not seen. But even in such a case a man need not despair. The god *Maha Kal,* Great Fate, is close at hand, and he can protect his worshipper from Yama. Here also are seen the images of the Panch Pandavas; the five brothers celebrated in the Mahabharata.

KAMESHWAR.—The temple of "the lord of aspirations," is situated among a number of shrines not far from the Mosque of Aurangzeb. It is much frequented, as the deity is supposed to grant whatever is desired.

KIDARNATH.—This is a large building, close to the river, with a fine ghat. It is near the Bengali tolah, and is much frequented by Bengalis. In the verandah there are several small idols, and two brass figures covered with a cloth, which is removed on payment of a small

fee to the Brahman in charge. The walls and pillars are chiefly painted red, but some are white. Two large black figures, each with four hands, stand at the doorway as *durwans*, or doorkeepers.

Kidarnath is a name of Siva, so called from the linga at Kidarnath in the Himalayas, one of the 12 great lingas.

At the foot of the staircase of the ghat is a well, known as *Gauri Kund,* whose water is said to cure fever and dysentery. If ineffectual, the patient has offended the deity, and an offering must be made to appease him.

To the west of the Kidarnath Temple is the *Mansarwar* Tank, where there are nearly 60 shrines; the number of idols is estimated at about 1200. Not far off is TILBHANDESHWAR, a stone about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height, and 15 feet in circumference. This deity is said to expand daily to the extent of a *til,* or sesamum seed.

MANIKARNIKA WELL.—This is above the Manikarnika Ghat. It is usually the first place visited by pilgrims. The *Kashi Khanda* gives the following account of its origin :—

"The god Vishnu dug this well with his chakra (discus), and, in lieu of water, filled it with the perspiration from his body, and gave it the name of Chakrapushkarini. He then proceeded to its north side, and began to practise asceticism. In the meantime, the god Mahadeva arrived, and looking into the well, beheld in it the beauty of a hundred millions of suns, with which he was so enraptured, that he at once broke out into loud praises of Vishnu, and, in his joy, declared that whatever gift he might ask of him he would grant. Gratified at the offer, Vishnu replied that his request was that Mahadeva should always reside with him. Mahadeva, hearing this, felt greatly flattered by it, and his body shook with delight. From the violence of the motion, an earring, called Manikarnika, fell from his ear into the well. From this circumstance Mahadeva gave the well the name of Manikarnika. Among the epithets applied to it are those of *Muktishetra*, 'seat of liberation,' and *Purnasubhakaran*,' 'complete source of felicity.' Mahadeva further decreed that it should be the chief and most efficacious among places of pilgrimage."

The well is of an oblong shape. Stone steps on each of the four sides of the well lead down into the water. The seven lowermost steps are said to be without a joining, and to have belonged to the well as built by Vishnu. When one points to the joinings which are plainly visible, the explanation is that they are only superficial, and do not go through the stones! Upon the stairs at the north side is an image of Vishnu, and on the west side is a row of 16 small altars, on which pilgrims present offerings to their ancestors.

The water in the well is not more than two or three feet in depth. The offerings thrown into it are leaves of the bael tree, flowers, milk, &c. The water is foul and putrid; but a worshipper descending into it, laves his head and body with the vile liquid, at the same time repeating certain mantras.

It is supposed that however great a criminal a man has been, the stinking water of Manikarnika sends him away pure and holy.

NEPALESE TEMPLE.—This temple is on the banks of the Ganges not far from the Man-Mandil Ghat. It was built by a Raja of Nepal in the style of architecture prevailing in his country. It is very picturesque, and the wood carvings are elaborate.

NAUGRAH.—This temple, close to that of Bhaironath, is dedicated to "the nine planets," who are supposed to influence human affairs. On all occasions of importance, a Hindu repairs to this temple, and after the usual *puja*, makes an offering.

SANKATA DEVI.—This goddess is supposed to grant children. Barren women are the greatest frequenters of her temple. One poor woman, after offering flowers, began beating her head on the floor, and with tears supplicated the goddess to grant her a child. "Lachmi" has given me wealth, so that I can daily feed a thousand persons; but I am still unhappy: is it your wish that my wealth should be enjoyed by strangers? O *Sidheswari*, give me only one child, and I will be your slave for ever. Even a daughter would be preferable to none at all. I vow to feed daily one hundred Brahmans at your shrine for a whole year on my supplication being granted."*

SANICHAR.—Near the Golden Temple is a small shrine, dedicated to Sanichar, the planet Saturn. The idol has a silver head, but is bodiless, the want being concealed by a cloth which hangs down from the neck. A garland of flowers hangs from each ear, falling below the chin.

* *Benares Guide Book*, p. 56.

Above is an outspread canopy. Saturn is said for 7½ years to trouble men, but exempts his own worshippers, on which account the shrine is frequented.

SITALA.—The goddess of small pox has four temples in Benares. She is supposed *for her amusement,* to scatter the seeds of the disease. Some ignorant people oppose vaccination, lest it should displease the goddess by interfering with her sport. There is no such being. All parents should have their children vaccinated. Vaccine matter was first obtained from a cow, and in some parts of India people are vaccinated from cows or calves.

SOMESWAR.—The temple of Soma, the Moon, is close by the Man-Mandil Ghat. Here it is supposed that diseases of every kind may be healed. Multitudes resort to the temple; but although not cured, their faith in the god remains unshaken. Others, more intelligent, prefer resorting to European hospitals or their own doctors.

SUKRESWAR.—A small shrine dedicated to this god, is near the Golden Temple. It is visited by persons desirous of having handsome sons. The god, it is affirmed, will bestow a beautiful son on his worshippers even in opposition to fate, and so long as he lives in Benares he will pass his time happily, and at death will depart to Kailasa, the heaven of Siva.

TARAKESWAR.—The temple of this deity is right in front of the Manikarnika Well, and between it and the Ganges. The idol is kept in a reservoir, and is invisible from the water thrown over it. This god is invoked as it is thought that he can breathe into the ear of a dying Hindu a mantra which will secure his admission into heaven.

In the rainy season, the river rises above this temple, which, for some weeks, stands immersed in the stream. Its foundations have therefore begun to give way. To lessen the weight upon the base, the upper part of the tower has been taken down.

VISHNU'S FEET.—Upon the Manikarnika Ghat above the Tarakeswar temple, there is a large round slab, called *Charanpadaka,* (impression of Vishnu's feet). It is said to mark the spot where Vishnu alighted, from the performance of ascetic rites and the worship of Siva. The marks of two feet are cut in white marble, in the centre of a round slab, probably intended to represent the *chakra* or discus. In the month of Kartik numbers come here to worship, imagining that it will secure their admission into Vaikuntha, Vishnu's heaven.

It is supposed that this is a modern imitation, copied from the Buddhists and Jains. There is another *padaka* near the mouth of the Barna.

WITNESS-BEARING BINYAKA.—The temple of this god is not far from that of Annapurna. It is a square, built about 1770 by a Mahratta. The office of this god is to testify in the next world that a pilgrim has completed the Panch Kosi round. To verify this, the pilgrim must visit this shrine. Should he fail, his pilgrimage will be worthless.

PANCH KOSI PILGRIMAGE.

The pilgrimage round the city and its environs is called the *Panch Kosi,* or the five kos—from its being a circuit of about 5 kos or 10 miles, within which the ground is holy. The pilgrims have to make this circuit on foot. They set out from one of the most sacred ghats on the river side opposite the centre of the city, and go along the banks of the Ganges upwards, till quite clear of the town. Then they cross the country to a village called Sheopur, some miles inland, and thence along the banks of the Barna to its confluence with the Ganges below the city, and up the river side to the ghat from which they took their first departure, having performed their devotions at each of the temples by the way. On certain days, many thousands of both sexes may be seen performing their pilgrimage of the Panch Kosi—which is universally regarded as one of the most holy acts that can be performed by a Hindu, being productive both of present and future blessings. *

MOSQUES.

Muhammadans form about one-fourth of the population of Benares. They are estimated to have about 270 mosques, of which a few of the most noted will be described.

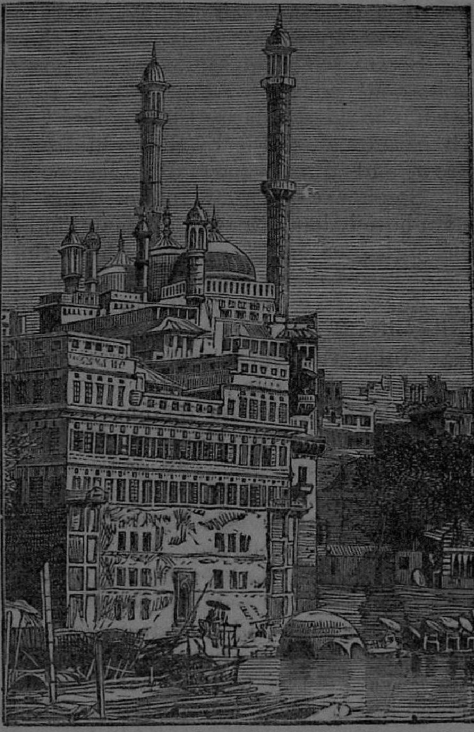
Aurangzeb's Mosque.—This is the most prominent object in the city, being conspicuous from its minarets.

The Mosque of Aurangzeb is close to the river. It stands on the site occupied by a

* Buyers, *Recollection of Northern India,* p. 260.

temple of Vishnu, which was removed to make way for it. The building itself is above the bank of the river, but its foundations sink deep into the ground. Indeed, it is said that the foundations are as deep as the building is high. On the east side a long flight of stone steps leads down to the river. The mosque itself is plain; but it has two minarets of exquisite beauty. They are 147 feet above the floor of the Mosque. Their diameter is 8 feet at the base gradually diminishing to 7½ feet. They lean 15 inches from the perpendicular. They were once 50 feet higher; but they were cut down to their present height as they seemed insecure.

The top of each minaret is reached by a steep, dark, spiral staircase. A fine view is then obtained of the city, the river, and the country around. It will be seen that while the streets in the centre of the city are winding and narrow, with very lofty houses, beyond them the roads widen, and many of the houses are poor and mean. Here and there are scattered fine mansions, surrounded with gardens. It seems like sitting in the air with the pigeons whirling around.



AURANGZEB'S MOSQUE.

Aurangzeb's Mosque is not much used for public worship. Only on Fridays a small number of Muhammadans assemble. On other days it is handed ever to the charge of a Mulla and his servant. The office is said to be hereditary.

Mosque near the Golden Temple. — This also was erected by Aurangzeb on the site of the old temple of Biseshwar, which was demolished. Extensive remains of the temple can still be seen. They form a large portion of the western walls of the mosque, and there is a row of Buddhist or Hindu columns in front. Though not small, the mosque is plain, and with scarcely any carving. It has long been a source of feuds between the Hindus and Muhammadans. The principal cause of dispute was the blowing of the *sankh,* which the latter would not permit on the ground that the sound of it during prayer destroyed its efficacy. On the other hand the Hindus insisted that the blowing of the *sankh* was indispensible to their worship. The result not unfrequently was a street fight.

Arhai Kangura Mosque.—This mosque, one of the finest in the city, stands in the Mahalla bearing its own name. Its lofty dome and some other parts of the building show a Muhammadan style of architecture; but it was mainly built from Buddhist and Hindu remains. The original edifice was probably a Buddhist monastery. This seems to have been succeeded by a Hindu *math.* A slab was found in the roof of the mosque with an inscription supposed to be equivalent to 1191 A.D. It shows that it belonged to a building erected by a Hindu subsequent to the Buddhist period.

Contrast of Hindu and Muhammadan Worship.—This is very striking. Instead of a noisy bustling crowd, individuals may be seen in the attitude of devotion, now standing with folded hands, then on their knees. No idols are visible; but worship is addressed to the great Creator and Lord of the Universe. All is solemn. The ground is not sloppy from the water poured as offerings; nor are there decaying flowers trampled upon.

IS KASI A HOLY CITY ?

An account has now been given of the city which is regarded by the Hindus as the holiest on earth, and where it is their earnest desire to end their days, under the hope that all their sins will be washed away, and that they will secure immediate admission into heaven. It is a question of the utmost importance whether such ideas are well-founded or a

delusion. What a disappointment it would be to a rich merchant to exchange all his possessions for a supposed valuable gem, which turned out to be a piece of worthless glass! Incomparably worse is the fate of a man who enters the eternal world with supposed merits which are in reality sins! His mistake is found out only when it is too late, and a remedy is impossible.

Some of the reasons why Benares should not be regarded as a holy city will now be mentioned.

I. It is wholly given to Idolatry.—As already remarked, its idols are more numerous than its inhabitants. This is a subject which deserves most earnest consideration. The excuses made for it and the great sin which it involves are noticed below.

Excuses for Idolatry.—A Hindu of Benares, in an English lecture, denies that his countrymen are idolaters. He says:

"If at the sight of a portrait of a beloved and venerated friend no longer existing in this world, our heart is filled with sentiments of love and reverence; if we fancy him present in the picture, still looking upon us with his wonted tenderness and affection and then indulge our feelings of love and gratitude, should we be charged with offering the grossest insult to him—that of fancying him to be no other than a piece of painted paper?"*

This is an illustration of the evil condemned years ago by the late Sir H. S. Maine—educated men employing their superior knowledge to defend popular superstitions.

Rammohun Roy explains how the above excuse for idolatry originated:—

"Some Europeans, imbued with high principles of liberality, but unacquainted with the ritual part of Hindu idolatry, are disposed to palliate it by an interpretation which, though plausible, is by no means well-founded. They are willing to imagine that the idols which the Hindus worship, are not viewed by them in the light of gods or as real personifications of the divine attributes, but merely as instruments for raising their minds to the contemplation of those attributes, which are respectively represented by different figures. I have frequently had occasion to remark that many Hindus also who are conversant with the English language, finding this interpretation a more plausible apology for idolatry than any with which they are furnished by their own guides, do not fail to avail themselves of it, though in repugnance both to their faith and to their practice. The declarations of this description of Hindus naturally tend to confirm the original idea of such Europeans who, from the extreme absurdity of pure unqualified idolatry, deduce an argument against its existence."

Rammohun Roy further shows the falsity of the excuse:—

"Neither do they regard the images of these gods merely in the light of instruments for elevating the mind to the conception of those supposed beings; they are simply in themselves made objects of worship. For whatever Hindu purchases an idol in the market, or constructs one with his own hands, or has one made under his own superintendence, it is his invariable practice to perform certain ceremonies, called *Pran Pratishtha*, or the endowment of animation, by which he believes that its nature is changed from that of the mere materials of which it is formed, and that it acquires not only life but supernatural powers. Shortly afterwards, if the idol be of the masculine gender, he marries it to a feminine one: with no less pomp and magnificence than he celebrates the nuptials of his own children. The mysterious process is now complete; and the god and goddess are esteemed the arbiters of his destiny, and continually receive his most ardent adoration."

The life which by one ceremony has been brought into the idol, can by another ceremony be taken out.

The reply has also been well made:

"It is true we like to retain photographs of people we love to remind as of their form and features; but your blocks of stone or your deformed hideous brazen images, bought at a shop in the bazaar, of what sort of Divinity do they remind us?"

The excuse is sometimes urged that *Idols are necessary for the common people.* To this Rammohun Roy replies:

"Permit me in this instance to ask whether every Mussulman in Turkey from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian at least of Europe, and many followers of Cabeer and Nanak do worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects? If so, how can we suppose that the human race is not capable of adoring the Supreme Being without the puerile practice of having recourse to visible objects? I will never hesitate to assert,

* Quoted by Max Müller in *Chips from a German Workshop*. Preface to Vol. I.

that His adoration is not only possible and practicable, but even incumbent, upon every rational creature."

Hindus admit that Brahm is *nirákár,* without form. Christians say that God is a spirit. A sculptor may make an image of a man's body; but can he make a representation of his soul? It is equally impossible to make an idol like God. "To whom will ye liken me or shall I be equal?" saith the Holy One.

The ignorant do not need images to remind them of God. They cannot understand His form, for He has none. They can remember their parents when far distant; they can love a benefactor whom they have never seen; they can obey the authority of a Queen-Empress though she never set foot on their soil. They can worship God who is a spirit in spirit and in truth. Idols are a hindrance, not a help, to true worship. They give most degrading ideas of God.

Folly of Idolatry.—Idolatry has been well compared to child's play. Little children talk to their dolls as if they had life. They dress them, pretend to give them food, put them to sleep, and so forth. Grown up people do just the same. They treat their idols as living beings. They offer them food, though they cannot eat; they have different kinds of music before images that cannot hear; they wave lights before what cannot see. In the cold season they furnish them with warm clothes; in the hot season they fan them; and lest mosquitoes should bite them, they place them within curtains at night.

The very idea is horrible that men should pretend to awake God in the morning and put Him to sleep as if He were a child. The omnipotent God fainteth not, neither is weary; He never slumbers nor sleeps.

Instead of the idols taking care of their worshippers, it is the latter who have to protect the former. They are constantly afraid lest the hands and feet of their gods should be broken. Robbers sometimes break into temples, and carry off the jewels. The gods cannot give even one good screech for help. Cockroaches sometimes destroy the colour of images; rats make holes in them; bats defile them; flies, after sitting upon various unclean things, alight on them. Where is their divinity, seeing they suffer themselves to be thus insulted?

Nearly 3,000 years ago, the folly of idolatry was thus shown in the Bible:—

Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not,
Eyes have they, but they see not,
They have ears, but they hear not,
Noses have they, but they smell not;
Feet have they, but they walk not,
Neither speak they through their throat.
They that make them are like unto them,
So is every one that trusteth in them. *Psalm,* cxv. 4—8.

They lavish gold out of the bag,
And weigh silver in the balance;
And hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god,
They fall down, yea, they worship,
They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him,
And set him in his place, and he standeth,
From his place shall he not remove;
Yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer,
Nor save him out of his trouble. *Isaiah,* xlvi. 6, 7.

In a lecture delivered before the Benares Institution 1866, by the Private Secretary of the Maharaja of Vizianagram, on the "Social Status of the Hindus," the following remarks were made on Idolatry:

"If we attributed to God, the creation of the world; if we endow Him with the qualities of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience; if we call Him the regulator of every mundane thing, how can we, without inconsistency, represent Him as a small idol? Is it not the greatest insult we can offer to the Almighty to represent Him in any shape? Can we represent Him? ... The shape in which we worship Mahadeo is most revolting to all who have any sense of decency and personal respect left in them. . . . Not to say that we regard the numerous idols as monuments of some bygone powers and no more; this would be something reasonable at least. On the contrary, we regard every idol we worship as the

*self-existent, eternal, Supreme Being, who is the cause of everything, and into whom everything is finally absorbed."***

Degrading Effects of Idolatry.—A Bengali, who calls himself Swami Vivekananda, said at Chicago:

"If a man can realize his divine nature most easily with the help of an image, would it be right to call it a sin? Nor, even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth."

The effects of idolatry are just the opposite. Falsehood does not lead to truth. The effects of idolatry are only degrading. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "The mind by continually meditating on a material object becomes materialized." People who worship senseless images end by becoming like them. They are deceived and cheated by their religious teachers in every possible way, but they do not see through the fraud. As already mentioned, they believe, in opposition to the evidence of their senses, that five rivers meet at the Panchganga Ghat, although only one is visible.

Sin of Idolatry.—The Queen of England rules over about one-fifth of the earth's surface, and over more than 30 crores of its inhabitants. Throughout all her dominions, it is considered an act of high treason to set up any other sovereign than herself. Such a rebellion would at once be suppressed, and all who took part in it would be punished. People are not at liberty to set up any king they please. It is the same in every well-regulated state. Any other course would be fatal to the welfare of its people.

The British Empire is a very faint emblem of the vast dominions of the great Lord of all. The universe belongs to Him by creation. He spread the heaven above us. He formed the earth beneath us. He is the maker of all things visible and invisible. He first called us into existence. Asleep or awake, we are dependent upon Him for every breath that we draw. It is He who makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine. All that we have is His gift.

The nature of God's laws is an additional reason for obedience. His commands are "Holy, just, and good." He enjoins only what is best for ourselves; He prohibits only that which it is our highest wisdom to shun. Our duty and our happiness coincide.

Just as the Queen of England forbids any one from setting himself up as king within her empire, so does God forbid the worship of any other than Himself. This is His first command. He cannot permit the creatures whom He made to rise in rebellion against Himself.

God is both our Father and our King.

The worship of any other is a defiance of God's authority, a declaration that we will not have Him to rule over us. All the guilt that lies in foul rebellion against the mildest and most merciful of earthly monarchs—in disobeying the kindest and grieving the best of fathers, in ingratitude to a generous benefactor; all this evil, multiplied a thousand times, there is in polytheism.

God is self-existent, unchangeable, infinite in power, wisdom, goodness and mercy, spotless in holiness. Who are worshipped in His stead! Senseless blocks, blind, deaf, and dumb, beasts, birds, and creeping things, the obscene linga, and supposed deities stained with every vice.

God's first command is not to worship any other than Himself. His second forbids the worship of idols.

Educated men taking part in Idolatry.—Many educated Hindus take part in idolatrous rites, pretending that they are harmless customs, kept up by female influence, and that they conform to them simply to avoid giving offence.

That idolatry is the very opposite of a "harmless custom" has already been shown.

The desire to please parents and relatives within proper limits is a praiseworthy feeling; but to break God's first and great command at the wish of any human being is a plea which cannot be sustained for a moment. Suppose a parallel case. Parents urge a son to take part in a robbery; they will be vexed if he does not consent. Would a judge accept such an excuse? Would it be true kindness to his parents to join them in such an act? Is he not rather bound, not only to abstain entirely from any participation in the crime, but to do his utmost to dissuade his parents from engaging in it? It would be great cruelty to behave otherwise.

* Quoted in *The Sacred City of the Hindus.*

An intelligent educated man countenancing idolatry is guilty in the following respects:

a. Of cowardly hypocrisy.

b. Of cruelty to his relations and countrymen.

Women are the chief supporters of idolatry in India. Poor creatures, they do not know better. Those who are mainly responsible for it and to be blamed are the educated men, who by their example encourage them in error. The women of India are naturally both intelligent and affectionate. If their husbands, instead of behaving as at present, would lovingly teach them to worship their great Father in heaven instead of idols, the reign of superstition would soon come to an end. The change is so reasonable as easily to be understood. It is so simple that it may be made intelligible even to a child.

c. Of high treason against God.

II. The character of Siva, the god chiefly worshipped in the city.

In the Hindu sacred books themselves, Siva's wife, Parvati, is said often to have rebuked him for his evil habits and associating with prostitutes. She was almost ruined by his habits of intoxication, in which he indulged to such a degree as to redden his eyes. He danced naked before Atri, and from the curse of that Rishi was punished in a way which is too shameful to be mentioned. He was ready to part with all the merit he had acquired by his austerities in order to gratify his evil desires but once with Mohini. Daksha gave in marriage the youngest of his daughters to Siva; but he became enraged when he saw the habits of his son-in-law—a beggar, smearing his body with ashes, living where the dead are burned, and wearing a necklace of skulls.

SAIVA SAINT.

Yatha devah, tatha bhaktah.—"As is the god so is the worshipper." The Saiva ascetics, who profess to copy the example of their lord, are some of the worst men in India. The Hindus are cleanly in their habits; but, strange to say, they appear in certain cases, to regard filth as a proof a sanctity. The Saiva beggars are dirty and disgusting. Some of them wander about quite naked. Though strong and able to work, they live in idleness, preying upon the industrious. If any refuse them alms, they threaten them with most awful curses. They stupify themselves with bhang, and are guilty of the vilest immoralities. That such men should be regarded as holy, is a sad proof of the debasing influence of Hinduism.

When quarrelling, lying, theft, drunkenness, adultery, and murder are said to be committed by some of the chief gods of the Hindus, the excuse made is, *Samarthi ko dosh nahin,* The mighty can do what they please without committing sin.

The idea is taken from a Hindu despot, who could do anything he liked, as take the

wives of his subjects or put them to death without trial, no one daring to find fault. This was the usual character of their sovereigns, and when the Hindus manufactured gods they took them as a model. Their gods are deified men.

The principle that the gods are not to be condemned for wrong-doing is the opposite of the truth. If a child commit a fault, he is blamed; if an ordinary man do the same, his guilt is greater; if a king does it, the guilt and evil consequences would be still greater. Krishna himself says in the Bhagavad Gita: "Whatever the most excellent practice, other men practise likewise; the world follows whatever example they set." Krishna's own example, as related in the Bhagavat Purana, has had a most pernicious effect upon his worshippers.

To say that the gods committed sin "in sport" or as a "divine amusement," only makes matters worse. Such an idea is blasphemous. The eternal distinction between right and wrong is thus denied.

The truth is that there is not and never was a god like Siva. Wicked men simply imagined a being after their own evil hearts.

III. The worthlessness of the means employed for Purification.—It is commonly believed that all who die within the limits of the Panch Kosi road are certain to go to heaven, whatever may have been their character. Those, however, who wish to make doubly sure adopt other means to attain salvation.

Bathing in the Ganges, and more especially in the Manikarnika Well, *Muktishetra,* are considered of the greatest efficacy.

Properly speaking, according to Hinduism, there is no pardon of sin. The *Karma,* the fruit of every action, good or evil, must be reaped. Sankar Acharya says that even Brahm cannot alter destiny. On the other hand, it is taught that the greatest sins may be removed by the most inadequate means. The Ganges has its source, like many other rivers, in the Himalayas, from the snow and rain which fall upon the mountains. Its water does not differ a whit from that of any other river.

In some respects the water of the Ganges is worse than that of other rivers from the horrible custom of the Hindus of throwing dead bodies and the ashes of the dead into it. When the writer was at the Dasasamedh Ghat, he saw a dead buffalo brought on a cart to be thrown into the river. The water is thus polluted.

Suppose a washerman puts all the dirty clothes he has for washing into a box and shutting the lid, washes and rubs the outside of the box ever so much; will the clothes inside the box become clean thereby? It is sin that has to be washed away. This is not sticking on the surface of the body, but is inside the heart.

Suppose a man robs you, but goes quickly and bathes in the Ganges, you afterwards catch him and charge him with the theft. He replies that he went immediately and bathed in the Ganges, so that his guilt was blotted out? Would you accept this excuse? You would think that he was making a fool of you.

How many men go from the river every morning to their shops, and there lie and defraud their customers! Look at the number of abandoned characters living on the very banks of the Ganges, and daily performing their ablutions in its sacred stream! The Gangaputras at Benares, are notorious for their lying and rapacity.

To any thoughtful man the inadequacy of the means for the removal of sin is apparent. It has been admitted by Hindus themselves. One writer says: "He whose heart is not pure will not be clean though he should get his body rubbed with mud as much as would form a mountain, and bathe in the Ganges as long as his life would last."

In all the 1500 temples said to be found in Benares, is there instruction given in any one of them on the duties of life? Are any prayers offered by the worshippers to enable them to discharge these duties aright? The priest mutters some words in Sanskrit which the worshipper neither hears nor understands. He goes away grossly deceived, thinking that he has "seen God," and acquired a stock of merit, while he has only added to his sins.

Are any of the religious beggars who swarm in Benares instructors of the people in righteousness?

Persons desirous of obtaining *mukti,* give themselves up to the study of treatises on what is called *Jnana,* or spiritual wisdom. These works do not enforce the duty of living virtuously. They assert, on the contrary, that both sin and virtue are delusions, which proceed from spiritual ignorance alone. Where such madness is accepted as "wisdom," morality must perish.

IV. THE SUPPOSED HOLINESS OF BENARES A GREAT DELUSION.—It is admitted that in Benares there are many people who earn an honest living by their labour, and there are some who may be regarded as virtuous; but, like other supposed "holy places," it is worse than ordinary towns. Of all cities in India, Benares is the greatest resort of pilgrims. Many of them are simple-minded country people. Men, called pilgrim-hunters, go round the country endeavoring, by the most wonderful stories, to induce people to come to Benares. Great numbers of religious beggars collect in the hope of getting alms from them. It is a duty to assist the helpless, the blind and the lame unable to gain a living; but these professed ascetics are generally strong men, too lazy to work, who wander about, extorting money by dread of their curses to enable them to wallow in vice. To such places prostitutes also collect. At great places of pilgrimage sins are committed which the fear of discovery would prevent at home.

The Gangaputras are notorious for their rapacity. Their whole lives are spent in trying to fleece pilgrims. To increase their gains, temples are multiplied, and it is said that if any of them are omitted, like the "witness-bearing Binyaka," the benefit will be lost.

Any person possessed of common sense can easily see the absurdity of the assertion that a person dying on the north bank of the Ganges is sure to go to heaven, whereas one dying on the south bank, unless special means are employed, will be born an ass. The object of this lie is to induce people to come to Benares to die to enrich the Brahmans. Only asses can thus be deceived.

Only Brahmans living near the Ganges profit by the supposed sanctity of the river. Those in the south make the people believe that the water of the Ganges comes once in twelve years to Combaconum, in the Madras Presidency, and lakhs of people go to bathe in a muddy tank.

The Narbada (bliss-giver) has its admirers who exalt it even above the Ganges. It is said to have sprung from the perspiration of Rudra or Siva. "One day's ablution," they say, "in the Ganges frees from all sin, but the mere sight of the Narbada purifies from guilt." Furthermore, either bank of the Narbada may be used for burning the dead, whereas only the northern bank of the Ganges is effectual for that purpose.

All such assertions are false. The Brahmans try who shall tell the biggest lies to extract most money from pilgrims.

Explanation of Eclipses.

It has been mentioned that these are the occasions on which vast numbers of pilgrims collect, supposing that bathing at such times possesses peculiar efficacy. As shown by the song quoted, the idea is that eclipses are caused by Rahu attempting to seize the sun or moon. The story, told in the Puranas, is as follows:

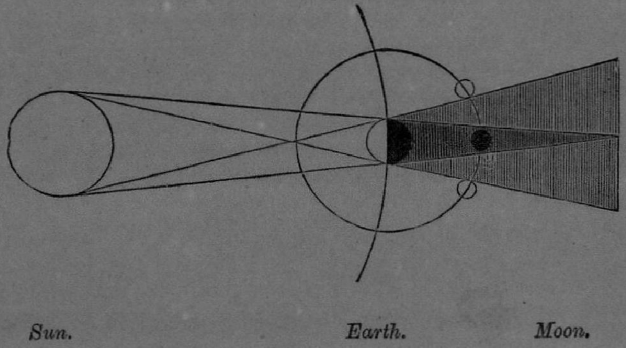
Rahu was supposed to be a great demon, with four arms, and a tail, like that of a dragon, instead of feet. When the gods had obtained Amrita, the water of immortality, by churning the Milk Sea, Rahu stole among them, and drank a portion secretly. The Sun and Moon, observing the theft, told Vishnu, who threw his chakra at Rahu, and severed his head and two arms from the rest of his monstrous body. As Rahu had swallowed some of the Amrita, both parts remained alive. They are regarded as the eighth and ninth planets, named Rahu and Ketu, and are said, every now and then, to take revenge on the Sun and Moon by swallowing them for a short time, thus causing eclipses.

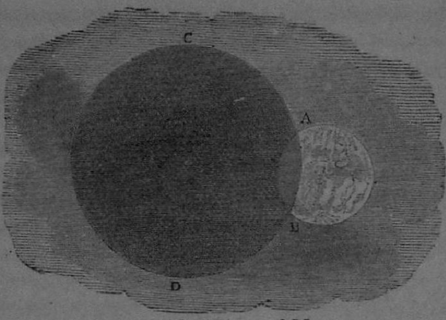
Rahu and Ketu are generally supposed to be large black and red serpents.

The Chinese also think that eclipses are caused by dragons attempting to swallow the sun and moon. On this account they shout, beat tom-toms, and make a great noise to frighten them away.

The true explanation of Eclipses will now be given.

Eclipses of the Moon.—These may be understood from the picture below. If you stand



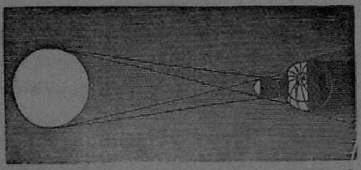


Partial Eclipse of Moon.

in the sunshine, your body casts a shadow. The earth also casts a shadow towards that side which is farthest from the sun. The moon moves round the earth once in about four weeks. If it passes through the shadow of the earth at full moon, it is said to be eclipsed. It has then a reddish-brown appearance. If the moon is only partly in the earth's shadow, it is what is called a *partial* eclipse. If the moon is above or below the earth's shadow, there is no eclipse.

The earth being round, casts a round shadow. The dark circle C D in the picture below represents the shadow of the earth falling upon A the moon. In partial eclipses of the moon, the darkened part is round, another proof showing that the earth itself is round.

Eclipse of the Sun.—This is caused as follows:

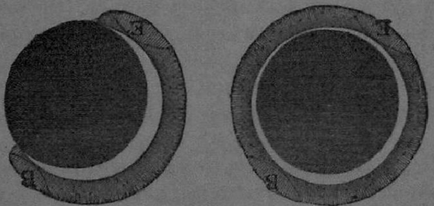


Sun *Moon Earth.*

The moon goes round the earth once a month. If it comes between the earth and the sun, the latter is eclipsed. If the moon is exactly between the earth and the sun, the whole of the sun is hidden, and the eclipse is said to be *total.* If the whole of the sun is not concealed, the eclipse is said to be partial.

Eclipses of the sun can happen only at new moon. They do not take place every month, because the moon is often not exactly between the earth and the sun.

Before an eclipse of the sun, the moon is seen on one side of the sun, and after it on the other. By means of a good telescope, its gradual approach can be watched.



The Moon concealing the Sun during an Eclipse.

An eclipse of the moon is caused only by the earth's shadow. On this account it has a reddish-brown appearance. But in an eclipse of the sun, the latter is hidden by the dark solid body of the moon, and therefore appears black. Hence the fable of red and black serpents.

Learned men can tell, hundreds of years before, exactly when eclipses will take place, how long they will last, and how much of each body will be obscured. If they were caused by red and black serpents, who could tell when they would open their mouths and how much they would try to swallow? Such an explanation is fit only for children.

Long ago Varahamihira, in a learned Sanskrit treatise, called Brihat Sanhita, gave the true explanation.

It will be seen by those who understand the foregoing explanation that eclipses do no more harm to us than a cloud passing over the sun or moon. It is no more necessary to fast and bathe in the one case than in the other. The ceremonies of the Hindus and the beating of tom-toms by the Chinese arise from the same ignorance. The people of Europe have now no fear of eclipses. They only look at them, taking pleasure in the strange sight. God's Holy Book says, "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them."

Every intelligent educated man knows that there are no such beings as Rahu and Ketu. The bathing of Hindus at eclipses is a delusion. This indeed applies to the whole of the worship at Benares. It is a gigantic fraud. The water of the Ganges or of the sacred wells in Benares has no power to wash away sin. There are no such beings as Siva, Bhaironath, Vishnu, Kali, and others, worshipped in the temples.

The Evils of Pilgrimage to Benares.

Falsehood cannot, in the end, do good; truth is always best. The family motto of the Maharaja of Benares is, "*There is no Religion higher than Truth.*"

Some of the injurious results of pilgrimages to Benares will now be noticed.

1. **Loss of Money.**—This is caused in two ways, by preventing people earning money and by taking away what they have. While money is not earned during pilgrimage, a great deal has to be spent. There are travelling expenses; but, most of all, the pilgrim when he arrives at his destination is beset by bloodsuckers who try to take from him every pice they can. The most outrageous lies are told to induce him to part with his money. To obtain what is required for a long pilgrimage, people sometimes contract debts which press heavily upon them the rest of their lives.

An Indian poet says: "The ignorant rabble, thinking that God is not present where they live, roam from shrine to shrine; and having lost all the money they had in hand, return to their houses utterly ruined."

2. **Toil, Suffering, and Death.**—It is true that many can now reach Benares by rail, but most pilgrims have also to walk very many miles on foot, frequently in the hot season when it is most trying. In the case of the old and sick brought to Benares to die, it often involves much suffering. When they should be resting on their beds, supplied with every comfort, they are sometimes taken to Benares when burning with fever or racked with pain.

Pilgrims are liable to be attacked by sickness on the way. They may have to lie down to die by the roadside, far away from home, and perhaps to be devoured by jackals.

3. **Increase of Wickedness.**—Holiness is to be obtained by deep sorrow for sin, watching against it, and by prayer for Divine help. Pilgrims to Benares hope to be cleansed from sin and made pure by bathing in the Ganges, and offerings to temples. Such means are worthless. How can gods, themselves impure, purify their worshippers?

The Gungaputras bathe every day and cause pilgrims to bathe. These persons ought to be very virtuous and holy; for if not, how can others be virtuous and holy? Such men flatter and zealously assist the rich, while they neglect the poor. As already mentioned, they cheat and fleece pilgrims in every possible way. If their sins are not taken away, how can those of pilgrims be removed?

The belief about Benares is an encouragement to wickedness. The moneylender who has spent all his life in oppressing the poor, the man guilty of the foulest crimes, thinks that if he dies at Benares, all will be well. So with the people who reside in Benares.

4. **Demerit is acquired instead of Merit.**—It has been stated that there is only one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, spotlessly holy, and infinite in wisdom and goodness. He is our rightful Lord. To bow down to a liar, adulterer, and murderer instead of Him, deserves punishment instead of reward.

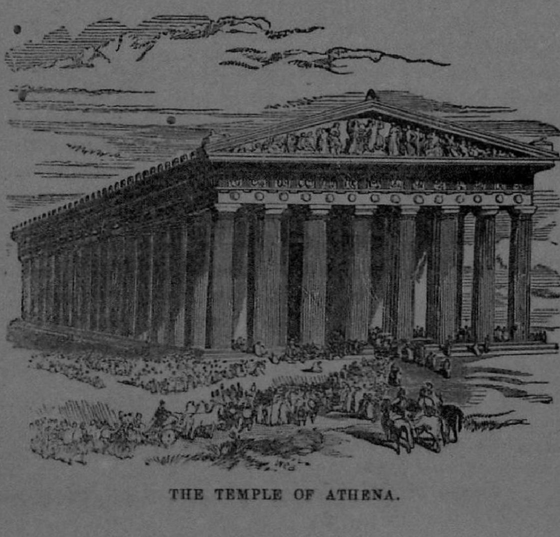
The gods worshipped at Benares are the inventions of cunning men to cheat simpletons. The poor deluded victims are spending money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not. They leave the world with a lie in their right hand, saying "peace, peace to themselves when there is no peace." Only when it is too late, will they find out the real state of things.

ATHENA, THE GODDESS SUPPOSED TO PROTECT ATHENS.

THE BENARES OF ANCIENT EUROPE.

Eighteen centuries ago Athens, the chief city of Greece very much resembled the Benares of the present day.

Athens is situated in the south of Europe, about three miles from the sea. The city stands on a plain, but there are four small hills, all of which formed part of the city. One of the hills, called the Acropolis, or citadel is a square craggy rock, on which stood the Parthenon,



THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA.

the famous temple of Athēna, the goddess supposed to watch over the city. It was built of white marble; the image of the goddess, celebrated for its size and beauty, was made of ivory and gold. Not far from the Acropolis is another rock, called Mars' Hill, where important cases were tried by judges. The plain below was covered with houses, temples, and other public buildings; statues everywhere met the eye.

Athens was noted for its idlers. Both the people of the city and the strangers who came to it, spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. The chief place of resort was the market-place, a square, surrounded with temples and shady porticos. Near it were some famous schools of philosophy. Athens was called by Milton, "The eye of Greece, the mother of arts and eloquence."

Idols were so numerous in Athens that it was said to be easier to find a god than to find a man. The gods were very much like those of India. They quarrelled and fought with each other; they lied, committed adultery and murder, just like Vishnu, Krishna, and Siva.

Europe has had its philosophers who speculated from the dawn of civilization to the present time. They wrangled with each other and taught the most outrageous doctrines, just like their brethren in India. Cicero, the greatest Roman orator, had studied philosophy at Athens, and was well acquainted with the different schools. He said there is no opinion, however absurd, which has not been held by some philosopher. Sidgwick, in his *History of Ethics* (p. 17), says that Socrates considered some of the doctrines of Greek philosophers so extravagant and so materially contradictory, that they were "like madmen disputing."

Dr. Mullens thus describes the Hindu pandit class, and shows the resemblance, in several respects, of the present state of things in India to that in ancient Greece:

"The Hindu mind is moulded in a peculiar form. In arguing with Hindus, whether learned or rude, we deal with men, not brought up from their youth, like the English and Americans under the philosophy of common sense, and hence possessing a reason, trained by experience and sound principles to judge fitly and simply of facts before them; but we deal with men of perverted principles, of judgments warped by absurd dogmas, men who have received the Vedas as true, and are perfectly willing to forswear the evidence of their own senses, wherever the Vedas contradict them; men who know little of the physical world, who have read little even of the world within them, and have received concerning things in general the theories which they have been taught. In Indian philosophy, therefore, we leave the sphere and age of Baconian inquiry, and are transported back to the age and schools of the philosophers of Greece. The Platonists and Epicureans, the Atomists and Stoics, are living and studying before our eyes. We behold the same select circle of students, the same system of verbal instruction, the same deference to authority. The same antique principles, the same deficiency of physical research exists among them, as amongst the sages of ancient Greece. The groves of Academus, and the many schools of young philosophers, still exist at Nuddea and Benares. Gorgias still displays his subtle rhetoric in paradox and sophistry, Platos and Aristotles still lecture to their disciples on the origin of the universe, the *summum bonum*, and the future of the soul. The defenders of pantheism still sit in conclave, discussing the illusions of Maya and the real nature of existing entities; and when they have proved to their satisfaction that everything is *Brahma*, they break up their lecture, and proceeding to the Ganges, spend two hours, sitting on its muddy bank, repeating mantras, reciting prayers, throwing in flowers, sprinkling the appointed water, and bathing in proper rule, in honour of those very gods, whose separate existence as real beings they had just before disproved! Such examples of contradiction between belief and practice are witnessed every day. Thousands upon thousands of men believe that both sides of a contradictory argument are true. In thousands upon thousands the divorce between principle and practice is all but complete."*

Athens was visited about 56 A. D. by the Apostle Paul, the first Christian Missionary to Europe. He went through the city from street to street, looking at every thing. His chief attention was taken up with the numerous temples and images. His spirit was stirred within him when he saw that the city was wholly given to idolatry. He felt sad that men should forget their great Creator, and give the honour due to Him to the work of their own hands.

When Paul spoke to the philosophers of Athens, he seemed to them to be preaching a new religion. As it was difficult to hear in the crowd, they proposed to go to Mars' Hill, close at hand.

They went up from the market place by some steps, to the top of the rock, where there was a level spot, encircled by a stone bench. Some of Paul's hearers sat; others stood around

* *Religious Aspects of Hindu Philosophy*, pp. 237, 236.

him. The blue sky was above his head; in front was the Acropolis, crowned with temples. Stretching out his hand, Paul spoke as follows:

"Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things; and He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us: for in Him we live and move and have our being: as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring. Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man. The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

A few short explanations may be given of the address.

Like the greatest of the Greek orators, Paul began with, "Ye men of Athens." He acknowledge that they were religious. The Athenians confessed by the inscription on the altar that there was a God whom they did not know. He was the God whom Paul preached. Pointing, perhaps, to the splendid Parthenon, Paul taught that God dwells not in temples made with hands, He is the great Creator of all things, and does not need anything from us.

The Athenians claimed to have sprung from the earth: Paul taught, on the contrary, that all men were equally made by God. He has given them power to find Him, though they have but dimly groped after Him in the darkness. In support of what he said, Paul made a well-known quotation from a Greek poet, "For we are also His offspring."

The Athenians were proud of the beautiful statues of their gods, but Paul declared that the Godhead is not like to gold, silver or stone, formed into images.

After teaching the "Fatherhood of God" and the "Brotherhood of man," Paul said that the times of ignorance God had overlooked, but that now He commanded all men everywhere to repent. He also spoke of a coming judgment, of which God had given a pledge by raising from the dead, the ordained judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, before whom we must stand at the last day, now invites us to come to him as our Saviour.

When Paul spoke of the resurrection, some broke into open mocking, while others, with a show of politeness, said, "We will hear thee concerning this yet again."

Still, some believed and were baptized. Among them was Dionysius, one of the judges of the court of Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and others with them. It must have been a great trial to take this bold step in a city wholly given to idolatry. But they sought the truth, and were not content simply to walk according to custom.

Although Paul never again visited Athens, a Christian church was established which afterwards produced some eminent men. The temple of Athēna was converted into a place of worship for the one true God, and on Mars' Hill there now stands a church, called after Dionysius.

It took two or three centuries before Athens became nominally Christian. It was only in 313 A.D., that Constantine, the first Christian emperor, issued an edict giving liberty to follow one's conscience in religion. The overthrow of the polytheism of the Roman empire has thus been described:

"That system, from the Euphrates to the farthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forests of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole region around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization and beyond them, have 'changed their gods.' The classic paganism, Greek and Roman, the Syrian, the Egyptian, the North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic, have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of 'the great goddess Diana,' or 'the image that fell down from Jupiter,' of Baal and Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Wodin."

The ruined temple of the Parthenon still stands, at Athens, but Athēna has no worshipper.

New Benares.

It has been shown that Benares has been successively Hindu, Buddhist, and again Hindu. It will pass through a fourth change which will be permanent.

A distinguished French Orientalist says that as India has already adopted the science and arts of Christian nations, so she will one day spontaneously embrace their faith.

India has adopted the science of Christian nations. No educated Hindu now believes in Mount Meru, in seas of ghi, wine, &c., or that eclipses are caused by asurs seeking to seize the sun and moon. The arts of Christian nations have also been accepted. Railways, the use of the electric telegraph, photographs, weaving by steam power, &c., have been introduced, and are freely employed. The Indian would be looked upon as an idiot who urged his countrymen to stick to the "national" conveyances of palanquins and bullock carts, and not travel by the "foreign" invention of railways.

Christianity is influencing and elevating Indian public opinion. A woman, according to Hinduism, is denied religious instruction, and taught that she has simply to consider her husband as her God. Under Christian influence, female education is spreading, and the just rights of women, long denied, are beginning to be acknowledged, though not yet conceded.

The Brotherhood of Man, diametrically opposed to the caste system, is gradually commending itself, for its truth, justice and tendency to promote the general happiness. There is now a greater desire than ever before to seek the common good, instead of selfishly consulting one's own ease and comfort.

Christianity is the religion of the richest, the most civilized, the best educated, and most progressive nations of the earth. As Gladstone says, "Christianity rules the world." The great inventions which have done so much to promote human well-being, as the steam-engine, railways, the electric telegraph, originated among Christian nations. Hindu, Buddhist, and Muhammadan governments are despotic; their rulers stand above law; their kingdoms are regarded as their private property; without trial they can take away the lives of their subjects. Christian nations, as a rule, have representative Governments, and law stands above kings and rulers.

The idea of *progress* is derived from Christianity. Among Hindus the rule is to *follow the ancients.* Instead of things getting better, this is regarded as the Kali Yug, when they are to grow worse and worse.

Slavery is sought to be abolished everywhere. Reformatory schools have been established for young criminals; trades are taught in jails to enable prisoners to earn an honest livelihood. Dispensaries and hospitals have been opened; societies, like Lady Dufferin's, have been formed to afford medical relief to women. Education is considered the birthright of every human being; all the States which profess Christianity are seeking, more or less, to humanize, reform, and elevate mankind.

Christianity is the only religion which is making vigorous efforts to promote its spread over the whole world. The last charge of its founder was, "Go and make disciples of all nations." Zealously carried out for a time, this command was afterwards neglected, and it is only in recent times that it has been obeyed, and hitherto very imperfectly. Still, there are thousands of Christian Missionaries scattered over the world. There is scarcely a town in India which does not contain at least a Mission School.

The Bible says, "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." It also contains many prophecies regarding the spread of Christianity. It was foretold of Jesus Christ, "His name shall endure for ever; men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed;" "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away;" "The isles shall wait for His law, and in His name shall the nations trust." These prophecies we see being fulfilled before our eyes.

The change of religion which took place in Europe, in spite of the strongest opposition of the Roman Government, will also happen in India. The temples of Vishnu and Siva will yet be as deserted as those of Jupiter and Minerva in Europe. The Eastern and Western Aryans will kneel at the same footstool, and offer the same grand old prayer, beginning, "Our Father which art in heaven." When this change will take place, we do not know. It took three centuries to overthrow heathenism in ancient Europe, and it may take as long

in modern India. Light, however, is gradually spreading, and an Indian Luther may yet arise to bring about a rapid reformation.

There is a book, called *Kashi Kanda*, giving the fables generally believed about Benares. The late Rev. William Smith, of the Church Mission, wrote a book in Hindi, called *Naya Kashi Kand*, giving an account of the *New* Benares. Only a few of the changes which will then take place can be noticed. People will no longer bathe in the Ganges or drink the water of wells for purification from sin; there will not be any Gungaputras, endeavouring by lies to extort money from pilgrims. Idols will no longer be worshipped; the temples, even that of Biseshwar, will be deserted. The one true God alone will be adored. Multitudes will assemble in large and beautiful churches to learn their duty to Him and to one another. Education will be widely diffused by means of schools and colleges. Benares will still be a great seat of learning; but truth, not falsehood, will be taught. The city will gradually become more and more a great brotherhood, all endeavouring to work for the common good.

Let the Indian reader seek to hasten on this glorious time by his personal example. From his understanding this account of Benares, he must have received a fair English education. He, doubtless, is convinced that the stories about Rahu and Ketu are fables; he may also draw the conclusion that Vishnu, Siva, and the other gods of the Hindu pantheon have similarly no existence. On the other hand, it is impossible that this great universe should have come into existence of itself: it must have had a Creator, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness. He, the Author of our existence, upon whom we are dependent for every breath we draw, should be the sole object of our worship.

The reader is also probably convinced that bathing in the Ganges cannot wash away sin, that merely living within the limits of the Panch Kosi road cannot secure admission into heaven. If he is at all thoughtful, he must feel that he daily sins in thought, word and deed.

Our heavenly Father, knowing our inability to deliver ourselves from the bondage and punishment of sin, has graciously provided a Saviour. The Son of God became incarnate for our deliverance. He perfectly obeyed all God's law which we had broken; He took our sins upon Himself and died on the cross. He answers for all who take refuge in Him; their sins are forgiven for His sake, and they enter heaven clothed in the spotless robe of His righteousness. They become the adopted sins of their heavenly Father; He watches over them through life, and at last they are taken to dwell with Him for ever.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth He gave the gracious invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let the reader go to the Saviour, asking the fulfilment of this promise.

For further explanations under this head the reader is referred to *Short Papers for Seekers after Truth*, * but, above all, to the *New Testament*. †

Concluding Appeal.

The author of the lecture on "The Social Status of the Hindus," from which a quotation has already been made, says:

"We cannot blame our ancestors for building up such a system of theology for us; but, as intelligent rational beings, it behaves us to examine whether our present religious ideas are consistant with reason, and whether they are calculated to give us happiness both here and hereafter.

"Purity of personal character is nothing to many of us: the Gunga and our idols help us to heaven! But, we are not free agents: what we do we do prompted by the divine essence implanted in us. Yet we enjoy the fruit of our good acts and suffer punishment for our sins! Our souls pass through a series of births according to our actions over which we have no control. We do nothing of our own accord, not even the act of worshipping our favourite idols! All this nonsense is the fruit of endless and superstitious priestcraft under which we groan."

Mr. Sherring thus mournfully states the delusion of the Hindus with regard to bathing at the Manikarnika Well, and his remarks apply to the whole religious worship at Benares:

"Its fetid water is regarded as a healing balm, which will infallibly wash away all the sins of the soul and make it pure and holy. There is no sin so heinous or abominable, but, in

* Price 1 Anna. Post-free, 1½ As. Sold by Mr. A. T. Scott, Tract Depôt, Madras, and at other places mentioned in the wrapper. † Obtainable post-free for 4½ As. at the Bible Depôt, Memorial Hall Compound, Madras.

popular estimation, it is here instantly effaced. Even for the crime of murder it can, it is said, procure forgiveness. No wonder, therefore, that conscience-stricken sinners should rush to this well from all quarters, and, deluding themselves by its reputed sanctity, should, by the easy process of washing in its foulness, seek to atone, in one minute, for the crimes and sins of a life-time. Yet it is appalling to think that the human soul, thus conscious of its guilt,—and perhaps in many cases in agony respecting it, and anxious for pardon, and for reconciliation with God,—should be so cruelly mocked and deceived."*

As already stated, the supposed sanctity of Benares is a "gigantic fraud." The poor pilgrims who come to it are only "cruelly mocked and deceived." Let the reader earnestly offer the prayer

"Lead us from the false to the true;"

and let him seek to spread the truth among his countrymen, endeavoring to turn them from "dumb idols to the living God."

Ponder the earnest words of the late Keshub Chunder Sen on Idolatry :—

"There can be no doubt that the root of all the evils which afflict Hindu society, that which constitutes the chief cause of its degradation is idolatry. Idolatry is the curse of Hindustan, the deadly canker that has eaten into the vitals of native society. It would be an insult to your superior education to say that you have faith in idolatry, that you still cherish in your hearts reverence for the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon; or that you believe in the thousand and one absurdities of your ancestral creed. But however repugnant to your understanding and repulsive to your good sense the idolatry of your forefathers may be, there is not a thorough appreciation of its deadly character, on moral grounds. It will not do to retain in the mind a speculative and passive disbelief in its dogmas; you must practically break with it as a dangerous sin and an abomination: you must give it up altogether as an unclean thing. You must discountenance it, discourage it, oppose it and hunt it out of your country.

"For the sake of your souls and for the sake of the souls of millions of your countrymen, come away from hateful idolatry, and acknowledge the one supreme and true God, our Maker, Preserver and Moral Governor, not in belief only, but in the every-day concerns and avocations of your life. By offering such uncompromising allegiance to Him and dedicating yourselves wholly to His service you will rescue your own consciences from corruption and sin, and your country from superstition, priestcraft, absurd rites, injurious practices, and horrid customs and usages. By declaring a vigorous crusade against Hinduism, you will lay the axe at the root of the tree of corruption."

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* *The Sacred City of the Hindus.*

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